

**EXPLORING KOREAN AMERICANS' INTERRACIAL CONTACT
EXPERIENCES DURING RECREATIONAL SPORT ACTIVITIES**

A Thesis

by

KANGJAE LEE

Submitted to the Office of Graduate Studies of
Texas A&M University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
MASTER OF SCIENCE

May 2009

Major Subject: Recreation, Park & Tourism Sciences

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Approved by:

Chair of Committee,	David Scott
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ABSTRACT

Exploring Korean Americans' Interracial Contact Experiences During Recreational Sport Activities. (May 2009)

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Chair of Advisory Committee: Dr. David Scott

Some scholars argue that organized sport is a viable context for different ethnic and racial groups to learn about one another and experience positive intergroup contact. Other scholars insist that hierarchical arrangements and competitive natures may actually exacerbate existing tensions among ethnic and racial groups. Less is known about whether or not recreational sport settings can facilitate positive intergroup contact. These contexts are often free of hierarchical arrangement and competition among participants, which potentially secure the equality of participants and facilitate positive interracial contact.

The purpose of this study was to gain richer insights into the phenomenon of interracial contact that Korean Americans experience in recreational sport settings. This study was guided by three research questions: (1) Do Korean Americans perceive the presence of contact hypothesis' optimal conditions in recreational sport settings? (2) What factors influence Korean Americans' perception toward the presence or absence of optimal conditions? (3) Can participating in serious leisure activity with different racial groups contribute to interracial harmony? This study adopted qualitative research

methods with a phenomenological approach. Face-to-face, in-depth, and semi-structured interviews were conducted with 15 Korean American males who participated or have been participating in recreational sports with racially mixed teams. The interviews were conducted in August and September, 2008, in two southern cities.

Four findings are articulated. First, informants held variable perceptions toward the presence of contact hypothesis' optimal conditions. Second, informants supported the existence of friendship opportunities. This study identified six key factors that play a critical role in formulation of informants' perceptions toward the existence of each optimal condition. They were: (1) skill level, (2) racial stereotypes, (3) physical attributes of recreational sport participants, (4) language proficiency, (5) atmosphere or culture within different recreational sport contexts, and (6) longevity of contact. Finally, informants felt that participating in recreational sports with different racial groups contributes to harmonious interracial relations. The findings showed that it is problematic to *a priori* assume that recreational sports satisfy the optimal conditions of contact situations. Moreover, findings suggest that satisfaction of optimal conditions in recreational sport contexts may not be necessary for positive interracial contact to occur.

To my parents, my hero and heroine.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The United States has been a multiracial country since its inception, and its history has been marked by intense ethnic and racial conflict (Feagin & Feagin, 2008). From the Civil War to the Los Angeles riots of 1992, the United States has undergone frightful bloodshed as a result of racial hostility. Although the enactment of civil rights legislation has achieved some level of equality among different racial groups, the U.S. continues to suffer ethnic/racial discord which threatens social harmony. The solution for this issue has been one of the nation's greatest concerns. As Feagin (2001) noted, "Over the last century at least a dozen major federal government commissions have looked into problems of racial discrimination or racism" (Feagin, 2001, p. 235).

For social scientists, finding ways to eradicate or alleviate racial conflict and prejudice has been the subject of decades' of long lasting inquiry. One of the most influential approaches in the area of racial and intergroup relations is Allport's contact hypothesis (Dovidio, Gaertner, & Kawakami, 2003; Pettigrew, 1998). Allport (1954) posited that the best way to alleviate conflict and hostility between different groups is to place them in contact with each other under explicit conditions. He argued that four optimal conditions have to be satisfied in order for intergroup harmony to be achieved: *equal status of participants, achievement of common goals, cooperative interaction, and support of authorities*. Since then, scholars have added a fifth condition, *the development*

This thesis follows the style of *Journal of Leisure Research*.

of friendship, as an essential condition for successful intergroup contact (Pettigrew, 1997; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006). Since the contact hypothesis was first introduced, intergroup contact has been believed to be one of the most effective strategies for improving intergroup relations (Dovidio, Gaertner, & Kawakami, 2003).

The contact hypothesis has inspired numerous studies across a range of social context and disciplines. Contexts investigated include the military (Amir, Bizman, & Rivner 1973; Brophy, 1945; Mannheimer & Williams, 1949; Roberts, 1953), educational institutions (Amir, Sharan, Rivner, Ben-ari, & Bizman, 1979; Feitelson, Weintraub, & Michaeli, 1972; McGlothlin & Killen, 2006; McGlothlin, Killen, & Edmonds, 2005; Odell, Korgen, & Wang, 2005; Pettigrew, 1969; Schofield, 1986), occupational settings (Harding & Hogrefe, 1952; Katz, Goldston, & Benjamin, 1958), and even tourism destinations (Amir & Ben-Ari, 1985).

It is notable that researchers consider sport settings as particularly suitable for interracial contact. Allport (1954) himself stressed the cooperative nature of sport activities. He stated,

Only the type of contact that leads people to do things together is likely to result in changed attitudes. The principle is clearly illustrated in the multi-ethnic athletic teams. Here the goal is all important: the ethnic composition of the team is irrelevant...it is the cooperative striving for the goal that is all important. (p. 276)

Sport activities in school have been regarded as particularly suited to breaking down intergroup conflict. Slavin (1985) insisted that while the interracial contact in school setting is often superficial and competitive, and thus unsuited for promoting positive interracial relationships, interracial contact during sports activities create “conditions of

cooperation and nonsuperficial contact among members” (p. 47). In a study reported by Slavin and Madden (1979), high school students who participated in sports with people outside of their own race had more positive racial attitudes compared to the students who were not involved in sport activities.

Scholars’ optimistic view toward the role in which sports promote positive interracial contact also has been echoed by politicians and policymakers. Krouwel, Boonstra, Duyvendak, and Veldboer (2006) quoted the Treaty of Amsterdam (1997) and the Nice Declaration of the European Council (2003), further lending credence to the belief that, in European countries, sports are a way for different racial groups to integrate harmoniously.

Brown, Brown, Jackson, Sellers, and Manuel (2003) provided teoretical support for useful of sport activities in reducing ethnic and racial strife. They argued that the athletic team environment may satisfy contact theory’s four optimal conditions. First, athletes have equal racial status in sport settings because they are ranked by their performance and physical ability instead of their racial background. They stated that “within a team structure perceived to be legitimate, many athletes recognize that each person on the team, regardless of racial group or depth on the roster, is capable of making contributions necessary for success” (p.1382). Second, players pursue success, which creates a common goal for all. Third, they must cooperate to achieve this end. Finally, a team coach occupies a significant authoritative role and secures the above three conditions. Brown et al. insisted that “athletics theoretically can satisfy the conditions necessary for a lessening of antagonistic racial attitudes” (p.1383). These

assumptions were partially supported by their research. It showed that White athletes who have higher percentages of Blacks on their team expressed more tolerant racial attitudes. In sum, sport activity is recognized as a potential vehicle for racial integration (Lapchick, 2003).

In contrast to the above research, other studies showed that this optimistic view toward sport settings may be utopian in thinking. Thirer and Wieczorek (1984) researched the frequency of interracial interaction between 117 Black and White high school athletes. Their study showed that the majority of Black and White athletes only interact with the friends who have same racial background with them; there was very little interaction between Black and White athletes outside of sport contexts even if both groups wanted to have more friends of a different race and to attend integrated schools rather than segregated schools.

Miracle (1981) argued that although the context of high school football teams makes Black and White students cooperate and lead to the reduction of conflict, these outcomes tend to be limited to the football sphere. Miracle found no observable difference in interracial behaviors between football players and general students in non-sport settings, and concluded that sport settings do not support the contact hypothesis.

Chu and Griffey (1985) also found few significant differences between high school athletes and non-athletes in terms of enhanced interracial outcomes. The only significant difference between athletes and non-athletes was the number of telephone calls they made to friends who were of a different race. Chu and Griffey questioned the applicability of the contact hypothesis in sport settings. Likewise, McClendon and Eitzen

(1975) explored the relations between college basketball teams' success (the number of winning) and Black and White players' racial attitudes, and they found that achievement of common goal failed to guarantee positive changes in racial attitudes.

Rees and Miracle (1984) argued strongly against the view that sport settings provide positive benefits, articulated by Brown et al. (2003). For several reasons, they felt that organized sport settings rarely satisfy the four optimal conditions of the contact hypothesis. First, Rees and Miracle argued that the equal status among organized sport participants is not guaranteed because different racial groups, especially Black and White athletes, grow up in different social environments, learn sports skills under different conditions, and have different styles of play. Second, they believed that cooperation does not take place if Black or White players hold positions that do not require much dependency on other players. Pitchers in baseball, for example, require relatively little in the way of partner dependence. Third, authority support may not be present because of factors which discourage interracial interaction. Finally, they argued that failure in achieving a common goal may cause frustration and scapegoating. All of these factors led Rees and Miracle to question whether sport promotes interracial harmony.

One of Rees' and Miracle's (1984) arguments was supported by Edwards (1973) and Rees and Segal (1984). Edwards (1973) indicated that equal status may not be satisfied in sport setting. He argued that participants in sports always represent groups or organizations, and this representativeness heightens the pressure on individuals involved in the effort and creates "intense seriousness of purpose" (p. 56). Edwards insisted that

this seriousness manifests itself in organized sport, which is similar to “bureaucratically structured enterprises in terms of role specialization, the complexity of its internal functions and the hierarchically arranged authority relations among positions” (p. 56).

Similarly, Rees and Segal’s (1984) research indicated that there is “a known status hierarchy” on a sport team. This hierarchy is based on the athletes’ performance and evaluation from team coaches. Athletes compete not only with opposing teams but also with teammates to acquire more playing time. This means that starting players derive higher status than substitute players. Therefore, team sport settings may not satisfy the condition of equal status among participants.

While Rees and Miracle’s (1984) argument has been persuasively supported by other scholars, one other question emerges: If the hierarchical arrangement and competition among teammates disturb the equal status among athletes and makes team sports undesirable for promoting interracial harmony, what happens within the context of *recreational sports*? Recreational sports are voluntary activities and participants are not evaluated by coaches. Thus, the hierarchical order such as classification of starters and nonstarters does not exist. Recreational sport participants do not have to compete with their companions to occupy higher status. In other words, the evaluation from coaches, which creates the hierarchical arrangement and the competition among teammates, do not exist in recreational sports. Therefore, there is a potential that equality among participants is fulfilled in recreational sports compared to organized sports. However, this possibility has not been investigated, and there remains a paucity of research regarding interracial contact in recreational settings in general. It is the first issue that

this researcher attempts to address in this study.

This research agenda is linked to the second critical question; how do we determine the presence of equal status as well as other optimal conditions in interracial contact situations? What seems most theoretically important is the contact participants' perception toward the existence of optimal conditions. In past studies, however, the existence of the contact hypothesis' four optimal conditions in sport setting has not been examined from the *point of view of participants*. For example, the majority of studies simply measured sport participants' interracial attitudes and behavior using survey techniques, such as, the number of phone calls from Black athletes to their White teammates (Chu & Griffey, 1985) and the willingness to support scholarship preference to minorities (Brown et al., 2003). If these two conditions are more positive among athletes than non-athletes, researchers simply assumed that four optimal conditions are present in sport setting (e.g., Brown et al., 2003). By contrast, if the result showed an opposite case or no significant difference between athletes and non-athletes, researchers questioned the applicability of the contact hypothesis (e.g., Chu & Griffey, 1985; McClendon & Eitzen, 1975; Miracle, 1981). In other words, the sport participants' perception toward contact situation has not been directly examined but has been distorted by researchers' own indicators. Little effort has been made to understand participants' views of whether or not the optimal conditions for interracial contact are being met.

Moreover, the majority of interracial contact studies only focused on the White and Black relationships. Although the Asian population has been dramatically increased

in the United States, little research has been conducted with Asians in the area of both interracial contact and leisure study. In particular, there are few studies that have investigated the interracial contact that Korean Americans experience.

Statement of the Problem and Objectives

The purpose of this study is to investigate whether recreational sports foster the elements of positive interracial contact. Scholars insisted that hierarchical arrangement and the competition among teammates do not guarantee the equality among teammates in organized sports team. In recreational sport setting, those two elements may not exist to the same extent. Thus, it is possible that recreational sport settings entail more equality among participants and facilitates more opportunities for positive interracial contact compared to organized sport setting. As a point of departure, this study examines the extent to which recreational sport participants believe the contact hypothesis' optimal conditions for promoting positive contact are present.

The research questions that frame this study are:

1. Do Korean Americans perceive the presence of the contact hypothesis' optimal conditions when they participate in recreational sports with racially mixed team?
2. What factors affect the Korean Americans' perception toward the presence or absence of optimal conditions?
3. Can participating in recreational sports with different racial groups contribute to interracial harmony?

Justification for the Study

The study represents the initial investigation on Korean Americans' perceptions toward recreational sport contexts. The study should provide four contributions. First, through its new approach to understanding the contact hypothesis' optimal conditions from the perspective of group members, this study will shed fresh light on an issue of central importance of the perspective. Second, while previous studies have examined organized team sports, this investigation focuses recreational sport settings. This should provide new insights into the contact hypothesis and contribute to understanding the dynamics of sport settings. Third, investigating on Korean Americans' interracial contact during recreational sports activities will provide information that may help improve the delivery of leisure services to Korean Americans. Fourth, while the participants of organized team sport are limited to athletes, recreational sports' participants reflect a larger proportion of the population. Therefore, investigating interracial contact in recreational sport settings may have broad, practical implications for policy decisions and recreational sport management.

Definition of Terms

For the purpose of this study the following terms will be defined:

Contact Theory: Allport (1954) defined contact theory as the belief that contact under four specific conditions between people of different nationality, races, and religious affiliations will disintegrate the stereotype or prejudice and strength favorable attitude toward each other. Four conditions that Allport emphasized are (1) equal status between contact members, (2) common goal, (3) cooperation, and (4) authority support. This

theory is also referred as the contact hypothesis.

Optimal Conditions: It is defined as the required conditions for interpersonal contact to establish favorable attitudes toward each other. Allport (1954) originally suggested four optimal conditions when he formulated contact theory. Since then, one more optimal condition, the friendship opportunity has been suggested by several scholars (Cook, 1962; Herek & Capitanio, 1996; Pettigrew, 1998).

Organized sport: In this study, the concept of organized sport is similar to what Mull, Bayless, and Jamieson (2005) explained as “club sport.” In organized sport, participants are associated in particular team and trained by team coaches. In organized sports team, “participants, leaders, and coaches desire more than just having fun; they seek structured contests where winning is important to everyone who participates” (Mull, et al., 2005, p.17).

Recreational sport: Mull et al., (2005) referred to as an informal sport which has “little to no structure and is completely self-directed. This program area acknowledges the participants’ desire to meet their fitness needs and interests and to have fun, often with no predetermined goals” (Mull et al., 2005, p. 16). In this study, recreational sport is an opposite concept of organized sport. It is defined as the sport activity that people participate during their leisure time according to their own intentions and desire.

Korean American: In this study, Korean American was defined as Korean immigrants who came to the U.S. live permanently from Korea, and their next generation who were born in the U.S.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter reviews literature related to the study of the contact hypothesis. The first section provides an introduction to the contact hypothesis and superordinate goals. The second section describes how the contact hypothesis has been tested in different settings. The third section introduces the study of interracial contact in sports settings. The last section is a summary of the ideas presented.

Contact Theory and Superordinate Goals

In his classic book, *The Nature of Prejudice*, Gordon Allport (1954) formulated the contact hypothesis (also referred as intergroup contact theory) and insisted that the best way to alleviate conflict, hostility, and prejudice between groups is to place them in contact with each other through various activities. Allport stressed that four optimal conditions are needed to make intergroup contact successful in reducing prejudice between groups (Pettigrew, 1998). The first is that groups should have equal status during the contact situation. Although equal status condition was not precisely defined by Allport, it has been accepted as the condition that groups involved in contact have similar status and power and must not be in a position in which one can dominate or exercise authority over the other (Farley, 1999). Second, groups must share a common goal. Third, both groups have to cooperate with each other to reach their common goal. Finally, authorities, law, or customs need to establish norms or atmospheres of acceptance. These four conditions prescribe the central requisites of the contact

hypothesis.

The concept of superordinate goal is another classic theory of prejudice reduction. Sherif (1958) defined the concept as “goals which are compelling and highly appealing to members of two or more groups in conflict but which cannot be attained by the resources and energies of the groups separately” (p. 349). Sherif predicted that when groups work towards a superordinate goal, out-group prejudice and negativity would lessen. He tested this concept in Robbers Cave experiment, a field experiment of racially homogeneous summer camp, and found that superordinate goals that experimenter provided to two groups of boys significantly reduced the hostility between them (Sherif, Harvey, & White, 1988). The difference between the contact hypothesis’ common goal and the concept of superordinate goal is that the former implies that the mere pursuit of common goals is sufficient to reduce hostility, whereas the latter showed us that the achievement of the superordinate goal is required for reducing conflict (Rees & Miracle, 1984).

Since its introduction, the contact hypothesis has inspired many intergroup contact studies and has received extensive attention from various disciplines. It has been examined using different methodologies (e.g., field studies, survey research, and laboratory studies), diverse samples with different age groups (e.g., adolescents, children, high school and college students, and adults), and diverse racial, nationality, and lifestyle groups (e.g., black and white, gays and lesbians, and Israelis and Egyptians) (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2000). The contact hypothesis has been the central focus in studies of intergroup relations, and intergroup contact is believed by some scholars to be one of the

most effective strategies for improving intergroup relations (Dovidio, Gaertner, & Kawakami, 2003; Pettigrew, 1997; Pettigrew, 1998).

The contact hypothesis also has been a target of criticism. Its theoretical framework, effect, and applicability in real life situations have been questioned by many scholars. Amir (1969; 1976) reviewed the effect of intergroup contact on attitude change and ethnic relationships and insisted that it is problematic to generalize the effect of intergroup contact without taking into account numerous variables in each specific contact situation. He arranged a multitude of variables believed to be associated with the result of interracial contact to explain complexity of intergroup contact situation (see Table 1 in Amir, 1976, p. 250-1). He concluded that intergroup contact under the four optimal conditions tends to reduce prejudice, yet this change is not extended to entire out-group members who are outside the contact situation. The impacts of contact, he argued, appear to be limited to participants.

Equal status has been considered the most problematic concept among four optimal conditions. The concept was not initially well defined by Allport. As a result, it has been the most contentious of the four conditions. Although scholars have accepted the other conditions without considerable opposition, the concept of equal status has been questioned by several authors. For example, Riordan (1978) stated,

Very few studies have attempted to *accurately* account for the equal-status variable, often being content to assume that groups are “relatively homogeneous” along “objective” measures of social class, or that people who visit each others’ homes are equal-status in character. The result has been that theorists and researchers have tended to ignore real status differences between groups in contact. In some cases, equal status has been defined as contact between selected members of rival groups who are matched on some variables such as socioeconomic status or degree of friendship. In other instances, an attempt has

been made to provide structural conditions which establish equal-status positions such as that of student, salesclerk, patient, or neighbor. (pp. 165-166)

Concluding his critique, Riordan stated that “there are serious difficulties involved in the attempt to implement equal-status contact” (p.176).

Ford (1986), in a review of 53 articles published from 1960 to 1984 in six major sociology and social psychology journals, pointed out defects in contact studies and stated that these articles are “grossly insufficient in representing the various settings of daily life” (p. 256). He concluded that the notion of intergroup contact as a means to alleviate tension and prejudice is “premature.”

Jackman and Crane (1986) also examined the validity of the contact hypothesis. Using national survey data from 1914 respondents, they drew on the racial attitudes of Whites who have Black friends. The researchers found a discrepancy between their findings and the contact hypothesis. While the contact hypothesis emphasizes contact with intimacy or friendship as a precondition of positive interracial contact, no significant difference between the impact of casual and intimate contact was found. That is, the effects of having a Black acquaintance on racial attitudes are about the same as the effects of having a Black friend. They also measured socioeconomic status within contact situations and found that the effect of contact between Black and White was contingent on the relative socioeconomic status of Blacks.

Pettigrew (1998) summarized four problems in previous studies of the contact hypothesis. First, prejudiced people may avoid contact with out-groups, thus leading to the potential problem of selection bias. Second, researchers do not distinguish between the essential and facilitating conditions for positive intergroup contact. This problem is

known as an “independent variable specification problem.” Third, there is “unspecified processes of change problem,” which means the contact hypothesis only predicts “when contact will lead to positive change, not how and why the change occurs” (p. 70). Finally, there is a generalization problem because the hypothesis does not explain how the effects of intergroup contact go beyond the immediate situation.

These critiques and evaluations have caused reconsideration of the contact hypothesis and spurred its reformulation. Two major issues in the perspective’s transformation are discussed here. The first is the emergence of a fifth optimal condition.

Intergroup friendship has been proposed as another requisite to make intergroup contact meaningful (Dovidio, Gaertner, & Kawakami, 2003). Several authors used different expressions to explain this condition. For example, Allport (1954) used the expression “intimate acquaintance,” alluding to the importance of friendship. He stated “whatever makes for equal-status relationships and for more intimate acquaintance is likely to make for increased tolerance” (p. 489). Cook (1962) used the term “acquaintance potential” and provided an explanation for this condition. He stated that when participants have a chance to get to know and understand each other and establish friendships, positive attitude changes can be predicted.

While previous literature utilized different terms and expressions to describe this condition, their main argument is that there must exist *opportunities for establishing intergroup friendship*. The significance of this fifth condition has been supported by empirical evidences. Pettigrew (1997) tested relationship between intergroup friendship and prejudice using 3,806 survey respondents from France, Great Britain, the

Netherlands, and West Germany. Pettigrew took into account six different minorities and diverse dependent variables (such as blatant and subtle prejudice, cultural differences, and policy preferences) and, suggests that there is a strong positive relationship between intergroup friendship and positive attitudes. He concluded that intergroup friendship is “a strong and consistent predictor of reduced prejudice” (p.180). Herek and Capitanio’s (1996) research confirmed these results. They conducted a two-wave telephone survey with a national probability sample in the United States ($n = 538$ for first and $n = 382$ for second survey) and investigated attitudes toward gay men and lesbians. The study revealed that intergroup friendship is highly correlated with favorable attitudes toward gays and lesbians. For example, respondents having a close gay friend ($M = 6.65$, $n=7$) showed significantly more favorable attitudes toward gays, $F(3, 50) = 3.25$, $p < .05$, with Attitude Toward Gay Men (ATG) scale score (lower score is more favorable attitudes), than for those with a distant gay family member ($M=9.97$, $n=17$). Pettigrew (1998) also stated that “the power of cross-group friendship to reduce prejudice and generalize to other out-groups demands a fifth condition for the contact hypothesis: *the contact situation must provide the participants with the opportunity to become friends*” (p. 76). He argued that this finding is “a dramatic shift for intergroup contact research literature” (p. 76).

The second critical issue was introduced by Pettigrew and Tropp (2006). They argued that Allport’s four optimal conditions are not *essential*, but merely *facilitating conditions* for successful intergroup contact. Their meta-analysis of 713 independent samples from 515 intergroup contact studies revealed four important findings First,

intergroup contact typically reduces intergroup prejudice. Second, the positive impact of intergroup contact is not limited to immediate participants but extends to out-group members in other situations and even out-groups not involved in contact. Third, Allport's four optimal conditions are not necessary conditions for intergroup contact to achieve positive outcomes; rather those four conditions should be considered as facilitating factors for positive contact outcomes to emerge. Finally, institutional support may be an especially important condition for enhancing positive contact effects among the four optimal conditions. Pettigrew and Tropp stated that their study results provide clear evidence that intergroup contact contributes to alleviation of prejudice across a wide range of groups and contexts.

Social Settings

Since the contact hypothesis was introduced, numerous studies have examined a wide range of social settings to find the most ideal condition for intergroup contact and verify the effect of intergroup contact. However, the contact studies have showed mixed findings across different social contexts.

Military Settings

Studies of interracial contact and racial attitudes first developed in military settings. After World War II, social scientists began to theorize about intergroup contact and its impact on racial attitudes (Pettigrew, 1998; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2000).

Mannheimer and Williams (1949) reported that White soldiers' attitudes toward Black soldiers were significantly changed after both groups were involved in combat situations in World War II. According to their data, 64% of White soldiers who were in completely

White companies answered that they would dislike it if Black soldiers were included in their company, while only 7% of White soldiers who had Black soldiers in their company provided the same answer. Brophy's (1945) study of the Navy also suggested lower levels of prejudice by White seamen who sailed more frequently with Black seamen. His research revealed that, White seamen's birthplace, level of education, and previous jobs did not influence the White seamen's attitude toward Black seamen. Instead, the researcher found that the number of incidents White and Black seamen experienced together (e.g., the number of sailings and enemy attacks) had a significant impact on their racial attitudes; the more both groups experience such incidents together, the more favorable attitudes toward each other.

Similarly, Roberts (1953) investigated how attitudes toward the White population changed after 219 Black individuals served in the military. Roberts compared Black individuals' pre and post-service attitudes toward Whites and found significantly positive attitude changes after completing military service. Roberts stated that "the most important change associated with military service is a marked over-all improvement in attitude, that is, a shift from a more negative to a less negative or to a positive attitude toward Whites" (p. 66). These findings indicated that intergroup contact in military settings contributes to reduction of racial prejudice and hostility.

It is important to note, however, that intergroup contact in military settings does not always guarantee positive changes in interracial relations (Amir, 1976). Amir, Bizman, and Rivner (1973) investigated attitude changes between European ethnic soldiers and Middle-Eastern soldiers in the Israeli army. Questionnaires were first

distributed to both groups 10 days after and then one and a half months after basic training. Initially, European soldiers highly preferred European soldiers for their friends while Eastern soldiers did not show any preference. Although Amir et al. contended that Israeli army satisfies Allport's four optimal conditions and, thus can be an ideal condition for favorable interethnic attitudinal change, no significant change to soldiers' preference was found after they spent time together during basic training, with the exception of paratroopers.

Amir et al. (1973) presented two potential explanations for their findings. The first was a limitation in their research methods. In both surveys, multiple respondents submitted identical names to the question, "Who are your three best friends in the platoon?" Amir et al. stated that small changes in soldiers' ethnic preference for their friends "may be not the unwillingness to accept a member of another ethnic group; rather it be that having become friendly with someone, one is not inclined to change him for another friend" (p.370). Therefore, Amir et al. hypothesized that the answers for this question might change once the soldiers are assigned to other platoons.

Second, Amir et al. (1973) articulated that equal status may not be fulfilled between Western and Eastern soldiers. They stated that Western soldiers were generally considered better soldiers than Easterners in terms of performance level, responsibility, attitude to peers in the platoon, and loyalty to the platoon. They also cited Rosenberg's (1966) report and pointed out that Eastern soldiers tend to evade duty and show up at sick call more frequently than Westerners. Amir et al. stated that "the intergroup contact in the army is not based on equal status relevant within the army situation," and as a

result, “one may have to accept the fact that there is no guarantee that every interethnic contact, whether in the military service or anywhere else, necessarily carries the potential for positive interethnic change” (p.371). These findings showed that it is imprudent to conclude that intergroup contact in military settings always satisfies equal status between soldiers and produces a positive effect on interracial attitudes.

Educational Settings

Educational settings have been another major research focus in the study of intergroup contact. In 1954, the United States Supreme Court ruled that segregation of Blacks and Whites in educational institutions is racial discrimination and is against the equal rights stated in the U.S. Constitution. This Supreme Court decision from *Brown v. Board of Education* case overturned the principle from *Plessy v. Ferguson* case in 1896, which upheld racial segregation policies in public schools under the doctrine of “separate but equal” (Schofield, 1986). The impact of the desegregation of public schools on students has been of great research interest to researchers.

One of the landmark studies regarding the early state of segregation in schools is *Equality of Educational Opportunity* (Coleman, Campbell, Hobson, McPartland, Mood, Weinfield, & York, 1966), better known as The Coleman Report. In this early study, Coleman and six other researchers investigated a wide range of issues related to the impact of school segregation. The Coleman Report showed that White students who attend public schools with Black students are more likely to prefer racial heterogeneity races in the classroom compared to those who attend schools with only White classmates, and this tendency is more obvious among the students who experienced racially mixed

schools at an early age.

However, Pettigrew (1969) argued that simple desegregation is not a sufficient condition for attitude changes. He introduced the Schematic Diagram of Autonomy and Integration-Separation and distinguished the conditions of “desegregation” and “integration.” While “desegregation” is simply a racially mixed environment in school, “integration” refers to a racially mixed condition where interracial friendship, racial interdependence, and strong personal autonomy exist. The author emphasized that simple desegregation is not a sufficient condition to produce positive changes in racial attitudes. Thus the ideal and ultimate goal is to achieve true integration in schools and society.

Schofield (1986) also insisted that mere desegregation of schools does not guarantee a positive effect on interracial relationships among students. Schofield pointed out the “American dilemma” as one of the main reasons which makes desegregation of schools as an inadequate remedy for positive interracial relationships among students. According to the author, the “American dilemma,” a term originally coined by Gunnar Myrdal (1944), a Swedish sociologist, refers to ironic value systems in the U.S. society. While U.S. society explicitly articulates liberty, justice, and equality of citizens, there is a clear distinction between the way White Americans and African Americans are treated. Prior to the 1960s, for example, separate water fountains and restrooms were common fixtures in America. Although such blatant discrimination was eradicated by Civil Right Movement in 1950s and 1960s, most Black students still attend schools in which the majority of the student body is non-White (Jehlen, 2007). Schofield argued that the

American dilemma is still sustained in the U.S. society and desegregated schools. He concluded that critical issue is not mere desegregation of schools but “integration” and how to promote the type of contact that alleviates racial hostility.

The above assertions from both Pettigrew and Schofield were supported by research from Feitelson, Weintraub, and Michaeli's (1972). Their research revealed that even three year old children more frequently interact with their own racial group when they are in racially heterogeneous schools. Furthermore, while children from racially homogeneous schools developed cooperative skills together in order to solve the given tasks, children from racially heterogeneous schools tended to depend on their teachers to solve the same problem. The desegregation of schools did not guarantee increased interracial contact.

Research conducted by Odell, Korgen, and Wang (2005) showed similar conclusions. They investigated the level of social distance between different racial groups in an institution of higher education. Although the institution under the study successfully attracted a diverse student body, faculty, and staff, and required students to participate in racism and sexism classes, no significant difference on social distance among different racial groups was found. Students did not reduce their level of social distance through their university experience.

Amir, Sharan, Rivner, Ben-ari, and Bizman (1979) examined the role of social status that majority and minority students occupy in schools. They asserted that attitude change was not only a product of an individual's status in the class room, which stemmed from one's popularity or academic performance, but also the status of that

individual's ethnic group as a whole. Based on this notion, Amir et al. focused on 9th grade students with Western and Middle Eastern ethnic backgrounds in Israel and investigated the effects of individual status and group status on change in racial attitudes following interracial contact in the classroom. The study revealed that minority students' group status in classroom significantly affected changes in ethnic attitudes compared to one minority student's personal status. It also showed that there was a positive attitude change of both minority (Middle Eastern) and majority (Western) groups when minority students had a higher social and academic status than majority students. Amir et al. concluded that the impact of interracial contact to majority and minority students' racial attitude has to be examined separately because the same classroom context can produce different results according to their group status.

The ratio of different racial groups in the classroom suggests that the relationship between interracial contact and racial attitudes is even more complex in school setting. Utilizing similar research methodologies in studies of first and fourth grade students, McGlothlin and Killen (2006) and McGlothlin, Killen, and Edmonds (2005) examined the effects of inter-racial contact on students' racial attitudes. The first study was implemented in two racially homogenous public schools (91% and 86% White). The second study focused on two racially heterogeneous schools (65% White, 14% Black, 8% Hispanic, and 9% Asian Americans; 30% White, 29% Black, 36% Hispanic, and 5% Asian American). While McGlothlin et al.'s study showed no significant racial bias among students, McGlothlin and Killen's study found that White children displayed greater racial prejudice toward different race groups. McGlothlin and

Killen insisted that this difference was based on the ethnic makeup of students and the amount of interracial contact that students experienced in school. They stated that the differences in racial makeup in schools can shape varying racial attitudes and children with little interracial experience will show racial bias.

Teachers have a role in whether or not inter-racial contact has positive outcomes. Cohen and Lotan's (1995) research indicated that students' academic performance may elevate their status. For example, if a student is a high achiever in mathematics, other students will expect him or her to solve math problems that they cannot answer. This expectation elevates that student's status in the eyes of his or her peers. Teachers may facilitate this process in one of two ways. First, teachers may emphasize each student's unique skills and show how they are needed to achieve collective tasks. The other way is assigning competence to low-status students (i.e., emphasizing the intellectual ability of low-status students in front of high-status students). Cohen and Lotan found that these two strategies accelerated low-status students' class participation rate and their status reflected in the eye of classmates. Although the main topic of this research is not related to interracial contact in classroom, it presents meaningful implications of how authority figures can facilitate positive outcomes in contact situations.

Positive change in students' racial attitudes is not easily achieved simply through desegregation of schools and interracial contact. Similar to military settings, the equal status of contact participants may not be satisfied in classroom, and interracial contact studies in school settings displayed mixed outcomes. In sum, the effects of interracial contact on racial attitudes in school settings cannot be generalized. Further,

the line of inquiry on contact outcomes indicates there are a variety of mediating variables that impact the effects of contact on inter-racial attitude.

Intergroup Contact Studies in Sport Settings

Opposite Views toward Sport Settings

For the present research it is notable that some scholars have stressed sport settings as a particularly suitable condition for successful intergroup contact. It is interesting that Allport (1954) believed that participation in interracial sports activities would foster positive changes in racial attitudes due to the cooperative nature of team sports.

Only the type of contact that leads people to do things together is likely to result in changed attitudes. The principle is clearly illustrated in the multi-ethnic athletic teams. Here the goal is all important: the ethnic composition of the team is irrelevant...it is the cooperative striving for the goal that is all important (p. 276).

Slavin (1985) insisted that while interracial contact in school settings is often superficial and competitive, thus not beneficial for cultivating interracial relationships, interracial contact in sports serves as an exception, as it creates “conditions of cooperation and nonsuperficial contact among members” (p. 47). A study reported by Slavin and Madden (1979) showed that high school students who participated in athletics with teammates outside of their own racial background had more positive racial attitudes compared to students who were not involved in sport activities.

Krouwel et al. (2006) quoted the Treaty of Amsterdam (1997) and the Nice Declaration of the European Council (2003) to describe the fact that politicians and policymakers in European countries believe that sports are a way for different racial

groups to integrate harmoniously. In general, sports are a widely accepted means of social integration, and it is believed that participating in sports activities with other races can foster positive relationships (Lapchick, 2003; Thirer & Wiecezorek, 1984).

The theoretical explanations toward this belief were provided by Brown et al. (2003). They argued that organized sport can facilitate positive interracial contact because it satisfies the contact hypothesis' four essential conditions. First, athletes are ranked by their performance and physical ability instead of racial background, thus it confirms equal status among athletes. Second, athletes on a team have a common goal (victory). Third, athletes are required to cooperate to achieve this goal. Finally, the team coach occupies a significant authoritative role and secures the above three conditions. Brown et al. insisted that "athletics theoretically can satisfy the conditions necessary for a lessening of antagonistic racial attitudes" (p.1383).

In contrast, several studies raise serious doubt that sport settings are trouble-free environment for interracial contact. For example, Thirer and Wiecezorek (1984) investigated the frequency of interracial contact between Black and White high school athletes. Their study of 117 male athletes from high school track, football, and basketball teams reported a limited number of interactions between Black and White athletes either at team-related activities or away from team-related activities. This was true even in spite of the desire by both groups to have more interaction with one another.

Miracles (1981) conducted participant observation of a desegregated high school football team over a three year period, observing athletes' behavioral characteristics across team and school conditions. Although the context of high school football teams

encourages Black and White students to cooperate and may resolve conflict constructively, Miracles found these processes limited to the football sphere and absent from non-sport settings. Additionally, he found no observable difference in interracial behaviors between football players and general students in non-sport settings. He concluded that his research result did not support the contact hypothesis because the interracial contact between Black and White football players did not improve their racial relationships campuswide.

Chu and Griffey (1985) reached a similar conclusion in a study of 1,100 high school students divided into non-athlete and athlete groups (students who had been involved in a sport league inside or outside of school). Through comparison of high school students across six behavioral (i.e. how one interacts with different racial groups) and attitudinal (how one perceives different racial groups) conditions, they found a significant difference between athletes and non-athletes in only one behavioral condition—the number of telephone calls made to students of different racial groups (athletes made more phone calls than non-athletes). Chu and Griffey concluded that interracial contact in sport settings does not make a significant impact in participants' racial behavior and attitudes and further argued that the contact hypothesis cannot be applied to sport settings.

McClendon and Eitzen (1975) investigated the relationship between sports teams' winning and athletes' racial attitudes. In a sports team of mixed race, winning is often considered a superordinate goal (Sherif, 1958), which is a common goal between different groups of people that cannot be achieved without cooperation to each other

(McClendon & Eitzen, 1975; Miracle, 1981). McClendon and Eitzen selected racially mixed college basketball teams and hypothesized that the basketball teams' number of wins is positively related to less anti-Black and anti-White attitudes, especially when there is equal scoring between Black and White players. They divided college basketball teams into four groups—equal-scoring winners, equal-scoring losers, unequal-scoring winners, and unequal-scoring losers—to test this hypothesis. They found that the White athletes in the equal-scoring winner teams displayed less anti-Black attitudes while the Black athletes in the same team category displayed the most unfavorable attitudes toward Whites. No evidence was found between winning and favorable attitude changes. Although McClendon and Eitzen's study did not provide a complete understanding of the effect of winning on athletes' racial attitudes, their research suggests that it is naïve to assume that sports are directly connected with successful interracial contact.

Rees and Miracle (1984) mused why interracial contact within a sport setting may not facilitate positive changes in racial attitudes. Their ideas directly contract ideas put forward by Brown et al. (2003). Rees and Miracle argued that organized sports settings do not satisfy the contact hypothesis' four optimal conditions for several reasons. First, Rees and Miracle argued that equal status among organized sport participants is not guaranteed because different racial groups often come from different social environments, learn sports skills under different conditions, and play sports in different styles. Second, they contended that cooperation does not take place if Black or White players hold positions that do not require much dependency on other players, such as a pitcher in baseball. Third, authority support may not be present because certain factors,

such as customs or local community pressure may discourage interracial interaction. Finally, they argued that failure in achieving the common goal (losing) may cause frustration and possible scapegoating.

One of Rees and Miracle's arguments was supported by Edwards (1973) and Rees and Segal (1984). Edwards (1973) indicated that equal status may not be satisfied in sport settings because athletes are always representing groups or organizations. This representativeness heightens the pressure on individuals involved in the effort and creates "intense seriousness of purpose." He insisted that this seriousness manifests itself in organized sport, which is similar to "bureaucratically structured enterprises in terms of role specialization, the complexity of its internal functions, and the hierarchically arranged authority relations among positions" (p. 56).

Similarly, Rees and Segal's (1984) research indicated that there is "a known status hierarchy" on sports teams. This hierarchy is based on the athletes' performance and evaluation from coaches. Athletes compete not only with their opponent team but also with teammates to acquire more playing time. This means that starting players derive higher status than substitute players. Therefore, team sport settings may not satisfy the condition of equal status among participants.

For the most part, recent critical debates about interracial contact in sport setting tend to focus on whether sport settings can make people experience positive interracial contact and alleviate racial prejudice. Although no clear-cut answer has been provided, several scholars have provided persuasive reasons that question the role that organized sport settings play in adequately facilitating positive interracial contact.

Recreational Sport Settings

If the hierarchical arrangement and competition among teammates disturb the equal status among athletes and makes the team sport setting as an undesirable locale for interracial contact, what happens to the sport setting which does not have these characteristics, that is, the *recreational sport setting*? Recreational sports are understood as sports activities that people participate in during their leisure time (Mull et al. , 2005). While Mull et al. insisted that there are five spectrums in recreational sport setting, this study focuses on people participating informally in a drop-in or open environment. The two main causes that dissatisfy the equal status of athletes, the hierarchical orders and competition among teammates (Rees & Segal, 1984), appear to be less salient in recreational sport settings. Further, recreational sports' participants are not evaluated by coaches, and the classification of starters and nonstarters does not exist. Therefore, recreational sport participants may not have to compete with their companions to occupy higher status. The equality among participants may be fulfilled in recreational sports settings compared to organized team sport setting.

Nevertheless, the majority of interracial contact studies in sports settings have examined athletes in high school or college; non-athletes' interracial contact in recreational sport settings has been the subject of few studies. Pioneer research by Krouwel et al. (2006) explored the interracial contact in recreational soccer games between racially homogeneous teams. They reported frequent verbal insults and physical violence that cause antagonism between two teams in this amateur sport setting. Krouwel et al. concluded,

Obviously, the assumption that mere contact in the sphere of recreational sport between members of different ethnic groups will automatically lead to more mutual understanding and to further meaningful exchanges at the cognitive level has to be rejected. The contact-hypothesis, seemingly so adequate for sport, is in fact naïve with regard to leisure time activities. (p. 176)

This conclusion is problematic in two ways. First, it was drawn from a situation that involved two racially homogeneous teams pitted against each other. The competition between different groups for desired resources can easily exacerbate the conflict and hostility between groups (Sherif, 1966; Sherif, 1989). In other words, this study did not examine interracial contact within a recreational sport context where players from different ethnic or racial groups played on the same team. Second, there is no evidence that cooperation existed between players of different race groups. As noted, cooperation is believed to be one of the essential conditions for positive intergroup contact to occur (Allport, 1954; Pettigrew, 1998). Krouwel et al. (2006) hastily generalized from their results without a thorough understanding of basic premises of the contact hypothesis. Therefore, to investigate whether recreational sports setting can facilitate positive interracial contact among participants, research should be conducted to investigate the extent to which the contact hypothesis' optimal conditions are present when recreational sport contests are racially mixed.

The goal of this study is an exploration of a neglected topic. It will examine whether the contact hypothesis' optimal conditions for meaningful interracial contact, equal status, cooperation, common goal, authority support, and friendship opportunity,

are satisfied in recreational sport settings. To achieve this goal, this study determines those conditions' existence by examining whether or not individuals perceive them to be present in recreational sports setting.

In previous studies, their existence in sport setting has been determined by researchers' own *assumptions* or *interpretations* and not been supported by any empirical evidence. For example, the majority of studies only examined sport participants' racial behavior or attitudes using survey questionnaires (e.g., the number of phone calls from Black athletes to their White teammates in Chu & Griffey's (1985) study) and the willingness to support scholarship preference to minorities (Brown et al., 2003). If these two conditions are more positive among athletes than non-athletes, researchers simply assumed that the four optimal conditions were present in sport setting (e.g., Brown et al., 2003). In contrast, if the results showed no significant difference between athletes and non-athletes, researchers questioned the applicability of the contact hypothesis (e.g., Chu & Griffey, 1985; McClendon & Eitzen, 1975; Miracle, 1981).

One problem remains: researchers have not examined critically the extent to which the optimal conditions of contact situations exist in social situations. To illuminate whether optimal conditions are satisfied in a contact situation, it is important to do so from the point of view of actual participants. In other words, it is important to understand whether actual participants think the optimal conditions exist in the recreational sport setting. Specific questions that need to be asked are as follows. To what extent do participants feel there is equal status among participants? Do participants feel they are cooperating to achieve a common goal? Do they believe their participation

has the support of authority figures? Do they feel there are opportunities for friendships?

The experiential aspects of contact situations have not been examined closely. Only a few studies have emphasized the importance that different groups perceive and expect equal status in contact situation (Cohen & Lotan, 1995; Riordan & Ruggiero, 1980). Therefore, this study examines whether or not recreational sport participants perceive the *presence of the optimal conditions* of contact situations.

Korean Americans

The history of Korean immigration to the United States has spanned more than 90 years. Due to Korea's political upheaval, economic corruption, and Japanese colonization, Koreans were "pushed" to the United States and also "pulled" by the sugar plantation owners in Hawaii in order to fulfill demanded labor force (Lee, 1966). Since the first 101 Korean immigrants came to the U.S in 1903, the number of Korean immigrants increased significantly. In 1970, there were 70,000 people of Korean background in the U.S. This number grew tenfold to over 800,000 by 1990 (Yamamoto, Rhee, & Chang, 1994). Although dramatic improvement of economic conditions and political environment of South Korea decelerated the influx of Korean immigrants to the U.S. after 1990's, approximately 30,000 Koreans have entered the U.S. each year since 1980 (Han, 2004). Today, the Korean population in the U.S. exceeds more than one million (U.S. Census, 2000).

Although Koreans represent one of the largest Asian immigrants group in the United States, Korean Americans have been the subject of few studies not only in the

area of interracial contact studies but also leisure studies. Most interracial contact studies explored the contact between Blacks and Whites. Korean Americans have received less attention from researchers. Moreover, study explored Korean Americans' leisure experience is scant, too. There are many both unasked and unanswered questions concerning Korean Americans' leisure experience (Han, 2004).

Chapter Summary

Since the contact hypothesis was introduced, it became a central focus of interracial contact. Scholars have tested this theory in numerous social settings. Based on the previous studies that explored interracial contact during sport activity, it is assumed that recreational sport settings may satisfy the equal status between different racial groups, thus there is a potential that recreational sport setting is a suitable condition for interracial contact to occur. Unfortunately, few studies have been devoted to the interracial contact in recreational sport settings. Moreover, existing studies tend to concentrate on interracial contact between Blacks and Whites. Almost no study has been conducted on interracial contact that Korean Americans experience when they participate in recreational sports.

CHAPTER III

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study was to gain richer insights into the phenomenon of interracial contact in a recreational sport setting. Specifically, this study attempted to examine whether Korean Americans perceive the presence of the contact hypothesis' optimal conditions when they participate in recreational sports with different racial groups, and to provide the foundation for a future research agenda that investigates the nature of interracial contact during leisure activity. To achieve this goal, I employed a qualitative research investigation with a phenomenological approach.

Moustakas (1994) stated that phenomenological approach aims to “determine what an experience means for the person who have had the experience and are able to provide a comprehensive description of it” (p.13). In order words, its aim is to understand “the meaning for several individuals of their lived experiences of a concept or a phenomenon” (Creswell, 2007, p. 57). Since the purpose of this study was to investigate Korean Americans' perceptions toward their recreational sport experiences with other racial groups, a phenomenological study was considered the most reasonable approach for this research.

Korean Americans who participated or have been participated in recreational team sports were selected as the subject of study. The recreational team sport setting is believed to provide more opportunities for interracial contact than an individual sport setting (Brown et al., 2003). While several researchers showed that people usually

participate in a leisure activity with members of their own racial group (Gobster, 2002; Shinew, Floyd, & Parry, 2004), recreational team sport, such as pick-up basketball or soccer more readily produces racially mixed teams and provides the opportunity for interracial contact due to the random assignment of teammates and frequent changes of teammates.

Subjectivity

In qualitative research, the presence of a researcher's subjectivity cannot be completely eliminated because the investigator is the primary instrument for inquiry (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). It means that "all observations and analyses are filtered through that human being's worldview, values, and perspective" (Merriam, 1998, p. 22). According to McCracken (1988), a researcher's prior experience and foreknowledge in the phenomenon potentially has "the grave effect of dulling the investigator's power of observation and analysis" yet, they can also provide researchers "a fineness of touch and delicacy of insight," that is an exceptional analytic advantage (p. 32). To maximize the advantages of my own experiences, it was important for me to carefully monitor my knowledge and past involvement in interracial contact situations during recreational sport activity (Merriam, 1988).

By analyzing my experience of interracial contact during recreational sport activities, I recognized my longstanding interest in the topic and sport activities, especially basketball. I explored many different kinds of sports for recreational purpose such as baseball, basketball, skate, ski, soccer, and swimming. Basketball has been my favorite sport since junior high school. Since basketball is the sport activity I have

participated in the most, almost all interracial contact I have experienced during recreational sports was within basketball settings. Although my birthplace, South Korea, is a racially homogenous country, which precluded contact with different racial groups, I have been exposed to three life stages which have allowed me to play basketball with other races.

The first stage was when I visited the United States and stayed on the West Coast for nine months as an exchange student from my college in Korea. It was then I first played basketball with different racial groups. In fact, I participated frequently in pickup basketball with diverse racial groups. The second period was when I joined Republic of Korean Army and served my military duty as a KATUSA soldier². I played basketball with fellow American soldiers and participated in several tournaments with them. The third stage is ongoing. I came to Texas in 2006 to pursue my Masters degree. I joined the Korean amateur basketball club at Texas A&M University and I have since played basketball not only with my Korean friends but also other races.

Throughout these three life stages, I have observed totally different outcomes from sport activity with racially mixed participants. Basketball with different racial groups has led me to observe friendship among diverse participants. However, I have also observed serious tension between different groups of people manifested by verbal insults and even physical aggression. These experiences made me inquire about the positive impact of sport activities in terms of racial relationships and the conditions or factors that produce different outcomes.

² KATUSA stands for Korean Augmentation Troops to United States Army. KATUSAs are Republic of Korea army soldiers who serve their military service in U.S. army posts in South Korea and work as the liaison between the armed forces of both countries (Di Genio, 2003).

Consequently, I have developed certain beliefs about interracial contact in sport activity. As a part of self-analysis and understanding his biases, they are written here in no particular order:

1. Sport activity with different racial groups does not always enhance the favorable attention toward other racial groups.
2. When two racially homogeneous groups are against each other in a sport setting, strong tensions usually arise between them compared to situations when two racially heterogeneous teams compete against each other.
3. Although participating in sport activity with different racial groups can strain interracial relationships, it also can create opportunities for different groups of people to socialize and establish friendships.

These biases I brought to the interview process were based on my own experience in interracial contact during recreational sport setting. Although they significantly helped me understand the interviewees' experiences, they also challenged me to maintain the credibility of the study; I had to pay extra attention and utilize some techniques to avoid misinterpretation of obtained data. The techniques I utilized for establishing credibility of the study are discussed later in this chapter.

Sampling Strategy

Purposive sampling was employed in this study because the focus of this study was not a generalization of findings to a larger population, but obtaining a deep understanding of Korean Americans' perceptions toward a recreational sport activity they experienced. As Lincoln and Guba (1985) emphasized, the object of purposive

sampling strategy is “not to focus on the similarities that can be developed into generalization, but to detail the many specifics that give the context its unique flavor” (p. 201). The number of participants depended on the richness of data collected, instead of predetermining the sample size before selecting the samples: “in purposeful sampling the size of the sample is determined by informational consideration. If the purpose is to maximize information, then sampling is terminated when no new information is forthcoming from newly sampled units; thus redundancy is the primary criterion” (p. 202). The sampling objective was to include Korean Americans males who participated or have been participating in recreational sports with racially mixed team. Informants were identified through gatekeepers, snowballing (the recommendation of a current informant), and recommendations of acquaintances. Two initial gatekeepers were the members of Korean amateur basketball teams and soccer teams at Texas A&M University and University of Texas in Austin. Fifteen interviews were conducted. Table 1 provides an overview of 15 study informants who participated in the study. All names are pseudonyms. The table includes their personal characteristics and sport participation patterns. Ten informants were born in Korea, and the rest were born in United States. Informants’ ages ranged from 19 to 36 years. The majorities were early or mid twenties. All informants were currently enrolled in college or holding at least a bachelors degree.

Data Collection Procedures

In-depth, semi-structured interviews were conducted with Korean Americans who played or have been playing recreational team sports with different racial groups. The interviews were conducted in English, Korean, or mix of both languages according

to the interviewees' preference.. An interview guide, which is "a written list of interview questions and topics need to be covered in a particular order" (Bernard, 2000, p. 191) was used during the interview process (Appendix B).

The interview questions were developed based on McCracken's (1988) suggestions. First, some biographical information and recreational sports participation patterns were asked to identify interviewees' personal contextual information and backgrounds. Second, interviewees' perceptions toward the presence of the contact hypothesis' optimal conditions while they participate in pickup basketball and soccer with racially heterogeneous team were asked. According to McCracken (1988), this interview format provides access to individuals without violating their privacy or testing their patience. It allows us to capture the data needed for penetrating qualitative analysis without participant observation, unobtrusive observation, or prolonged contact. It allows us, in other words, to achieve crucial qualitative objectives within a manageable methodological context. (p. 11)

All interviews were audio recorded to provide a full account of the interview process and outcomes. The average length of interviews was approximately one hour. After conducting several interviews with Korean Americans, I became familiar with the entire interview process and to finalize the interview questions. Interview locations were determined by interviewees' convenience. Interviews were conducted at Interviewer's house, office, local coffee shops around the campus of Texas A&M University and University of Texas, Austin. The purpose of the study and interview were explained to interviewees, and they were asked to read and sign the consent form prior to the

interview (Appendix A).

The questions in the second category are potentially sensitive because interviewees may perceive that these questions may hint at racial stereotypes. To avoid social desirability bias (Jones, 1996) and acquire accurate data, two techniques were employed. First, supportive and nonjudgmental questions with the long-question probe (Bernard, 2000) were asked to interviewees instead of short and direct questions. Second, the sequence of questions was controlled; questions which were easy to answer were asked at the beginning of the interview to develop some degree of rapport between interviewer and interviewee (Jones, 1996).

During the entire interview process, some probing techniques, such as nodding the head, “uh-huh” probe, and “tell-me-more” probe were used to encourage the interviewee to talk freely. Open-ended questions were asked in the interview in order to generate more insightful information from respondents.

Data Analysis

There are various ways of data analysis in qualitative research, yet most qualitative researchers agree on three fundamental steps that are associated with the process of analyzing qualitative data. These include: (1) fragmentation of the data into discrete units of meaning, (2) the construction of themes (or categories) that are formed from related units, and (3) the identification of relationships between categories (Creswell, 2007; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). These three steps of data analysis process are not completely distinct from one another. According to Creswell, data collection, analysis, and report of findings are interrelated and often go on simultaneously in

qualitative research. This study adopted a phenomenological data analysis method suggested by Colaizzi (1978). Among several qualitative data analysis methods, Creswell argued that this method is the most practical and useful approach in phenomenological study. I used five data analysis steps, and each step is described as below.

Reading All Transcripts

I read through all transcripts obtained from the interviews. Reading all transcripts several times helped me become familiar with the contents and obtain an overall sense of data (Creswell, 2007).

Horizontalizing of the Data

Horizontalization is explained as extracting significant statements from original transcripts (Moustakas, 1994), and significant statements mean “the phrases or sentences that directly pertain to the investigated phenomenon” (Colaizzi, 1978). I sought to identify significant statements which describe how interviewees experienced recreational team sports with racially mixed groups of people. Similar to “unitizing” process (p.344) that Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggested, I entered each significant statement onto white index cards. These cards were coded with the designation of interview location, characteristic of interviewee, and particular events during interview. This process helped the data to be better organized and presented.

Formulating Meanings

This data analysis step is known as trying to “spell out the meanings of each significant statement” (Colaizzi, 1978). I prepared blue index cards and wrote the

Table 1
Characteristics of Informants

I-1. Peter, male, 22 years old, college student, born and lives in the United States his whole life; played football in junior high school; enjoys basketball and soccer, currently involved in Korean amateur soccer team.
I-2. David, 20 years old, college student, born in the United States, lived in Korea for seven years, plays soccer approximately twice a week with a racially diverse group of people; involved in a city league team; started playing soccer in the 5 th grade.
I-3. Jake, 21 years old, college student, born in the United States, lived in Korea for seven years; enjoyed playing track, tennis, basketball, soccer, tennis in high school; favorite sport is soccer and started playing three years ago; involved in a Korean amateur soccer club; currently participating in intramural soccer league with his high school friends who are racially diverse.
I-4. John, 29 years old, college student, married, born in Korea, came to the United States when he was seven years old, has lived in many different states; used to be in a track team when he was attending middle school in Korea, a former state champion wrestler; used to play soccer and basketball for his high school; currently involved in a Korean amateur soccer club.
I-5. WooSung, 19 years old, college student, born in Korea, came to the United States when he was 12 years old; started playing basketball after he arrived in the U.S.; lived in racially diverse neighborhood where few Asians lived; majority of his friends are not Asians; involved in a Korean amateur soccer club.
I-6. JeeHun, 30 years old, business owner, married. Born in Korea, came to the United States when he was four years old; possesses a strong passion for all kinds of sports, especially golf and basketball; grow up in African American neighborhood and used to play basketball only with African Americans; used to play and practice basketball almost everyday when he was a college student; currently tries to play basketball at least once a week; involved in a Korean amateur basketball club.
I-7. MinSoo, 24 years old, college student, born in Korea, lived in Argentina and Mexico before he came to the United States, lived in the U.S. for four years; enjoys many different sports; involved in a Korean amateur basketball club.
I-8. Edward, 20 years old, college student, born in Korea, lived in the United States for four years; enjoys soccer and basketball; plays soccer with racially diverse group of people; involved in a Korean amateur basketball club.
I-9. Harrison, 36 years old, professional, single, born in Korea, moved to the United States when he was four years old; majority of his recreational sports experience

Table 1, continued

took place in Iowa and Illinois when he was a high school and college student.
I-10. Bob, 20 years old, college student, born in Korea, came to the United States when he was 13 years old; plays soccer and basketball; used to play basketball almost every night before he got a back injury; involved in a Korean amateur basketball club.
I-11. ChulSoo. 31 years old, graduate student, born in Korea, came to the United States when he was 24 years old; going to swimming for the rehabilitation from a back surgery; enjoys basketball; a founding member of a Korean amateur basketball club.
I-12. TaeWon, 33 years old, graduate student, married, born in Korea, came to the United States when he was 28 years old; enjoys basketball; involved in amateur Korean basketball club; prefers to playing basketball with his Korean friends.
I-13. Jo, 20 years old, college student, came to the United States 8 years ago, currently plays soccer almost every day; involved in Korean amateur soccer team.
I-14. Daniel, 20 years old, college student, born in the United States; has stayed in the U.S. for 5 years; plays tennis and basketball.
I-15. Josh, 20 years old, college student, born and lives in the United States his whole life; plays tennis.

Note. the interviewees' names used in this study are pseudonyms.

formulated meanings extracted from significant statements. The white index cards, which contained significant statements, were placed under the blue index cards. By doing this, the data were organized systematically.

Clustering Meaning into Themes

The formulated meanings were clustered into themes. The clusters of themes were compared to original transcripts in order to *validate* them (Colaizzi, 1978). At this point, the contents in both original transcripts and the clusters of themes were made to be consistent. If original transcripts imply something that the clusters of themes did not contain or vice versa, the data analysis was conducted over again.

Integration

At this step, the results of everything so far were integrated into “an exhaustive description of the investigated topics” (p.61).

Confirmation from the Interviewees

Once the description and themes were obtained, I returned to the interviewees and received their consent about the findings from his/her data analysis. This was my final step for validating the data and outcomes from data analysis.

Trustworthiness of Study

While trustworthiness of quantitative researches can be achieved by establishing internal validity, external validity, reliability, and objectivity, it is not appropriate to utilize these concepts in different study paradigm because different paradigms make different knowledge claims (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). Lincoln and Guba introduced four different criteria which are more appropriate for estimating trustworthiness of study

in qualitative research paradigm. They include credibility, transferability, dependability and conformability. These ideas are somewhat analogous to quantitative study's internal validity, external validity, reliability, and objectivity.

Credibility

Credibility refers to the extent to which the researchers' reconstructions are compatible with the constructed realities that exist in the minds of the study informants (Erlandson, Harris, Skipper, & Allen, 1993). Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggested five techniques that researchers can establish the credibility. They are (1) activities that make it more likely that credible findings and interpretations will be produced, such as prolonged engagement, persistent observation, and triangulation, (2) peer debriefing, (3) negative case analysis, (4) referential adequacy, and (5) member checking. As I mentioned earlier, this study utilized member checking technique. Member checking is the most crucial technique for establishing credibility, whereby "data, analytic categories, interpretations, and conclusions are tested with members of those stakeholding groups from whom the data were originally collected" (Lincoln and Guba, 1985, p.314).

Transferability

The concept of transferability is somewhat analogous to that of external validity in quantitative research. However, the purpose of qualitative research is to create working hypotheses only for the time and context associated with a specific study.

Lincoln and Guba (1985) stated,

Whether [hypotheses] hold in some other context, or even in the same context at some other time, is an empirical issue, the resolution of which depends upon the degree of similarity between sending and receiving context. Thus the naturalist cannot specify the external validity of an inquiry; he or she can provide only the

thick description necessary to enable someone interested in making a transfer to reach a conclusion about whether transfer can be contemplated as a possibility. (p. 316)

To this end, it is my responsibility to provide a sufficient level of detail and thick description about the phenomenon of interracial contact in recreational sport activity. The study's applicability to a different context should be determined by future researchers.

Dependability

Dependability indicates the consistency of study (Erlandson et al., 1993). The researcher needs to show the evidence that the findings will be repeated if the study was replicated with same or similar respondents and context. Thus, it is a somewhat analogous concept to reliability. One of the techniques that Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggested for establishing dependability of study is inquiry audit. Inquiry audit means that researchers maintain an audit trail that describes the process and product of inquiry. This was done by providing documentation such as interview notes and a running account of the process such as my daily journal (Erlandson et al., 1993)

Conformability

The final criterion for trustworthiness is conformability. It refers to the extent to which the findings can be judged to be a product of the informants' constructions, and not the biases, motivations, interests, or perspectives of the researcher (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In other words, this concept can be explained as objectivity. However, the researchers' biases are present and inherent to the qualitative research process. Erlandson et al. (1993) stated,

The naturalistic researcher does not attempt to ensure that observations are free from contamination by the researcher but rather to trust in the “confirmability” of the data themselves. This means that data (constructions, assertions, facts, and so on) can be tracked to their sources, and that the logic used to assemble the interpretations into structurally coherent and corroborating wholes is both explicit and implicit. (p. 34)

As suggested by Lincoln and Guba (1985), this researcher maintained audit trail, which is considered as a helpful way to establish not only dependability but also conformability of the study.

Chapter Summary

This chapter described the study methodology. This study adopted naturalistic research paradigm with a phenomenological approach in order to gain richer insights into the phenomenon of interracial contact that Korean Americans experience in recreational sports. Interviews were identified through a process of snowball sampling. The primary form of data collection was in-depth and semi-structured interviews. Fifteen interviews were conducted in total. Three fundamental steps that researchers accepted as the process of a qualitative data analysis (Creswell, 2007; Lincoln & Guba, 1985) were used.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

The purpose of this study is to gain richer insights into the phenomenon of interracial contact in recreational sport settings. Specifically, this study attempts to examine whether Korean Americans perceive the presence of the contact hypothesis' optimal conditions when they participate in recreational sports with different racial groups. Two predominant findings emerged from the data. First, although several researchers insist that organized sport settings satisfy the contact hypothesis' optimal conditions, thus fostering positive contact between two different groups (Brown et al., 2003), the study informants varied greatly in their assessment of the extent to which they perceived the presence of optimal conditions in recreational sports. Second, although informants held different views toward the presence of Allport's (1954) four optimal conditions for positive intergroup contact, informants strongly supported the idea that recreational sport activities provide the opportunities for friendship, a condition deemed important by others (Pettigrew, 1998; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006). Moreover, informants believe participating in recreational sports will facilitate the establishment of friendships with individuals of other racial backgrounds and contribute to effective integration of different racial groups.

This chapter is divided in two major sections. The first section articulates why each informant perceives the presence of the optimal conditions in recreational sport settings differently. The second section of this chapter will illustrate why informants

strongly and commonly believe that recreational sport settings are one of the best contexts for positive interracial contact regardless of fulfillment of Allport's (1954) four optimal conditions.

Participants

Participant interviews revealed a complex dynamic of interracial contact within recreational sport activities. The informants varied greatly in their assessment of the extent to which they perceived the presence of the optimal conditions of contact in recreational sports. This first section of the current chapter intends to provide deeper insight about such discrepancies. I identified six key factors which shape informants' different perspectives toward optimal conditions. These six factors were: (1) skill level, (2) racial stereotypes, (3) physical attributes, (4) language proficiency, (5) different atmosphere or culture among different racial groups, and (6) longevity of contact. How these factors are related to each optimal condition is outlined in Table 2. The chapter examines how these factors construct the informants' perception toward the existence of each optimal condition.

Equal Status

Informants revealed two contrasting perspectives concerning the absence and presence of equal status condition. One group of informants believed that equal status is absent in recreational sport settings because participants have different status according to their skill levels. Racial stereotypes and physical attributes of participants seem to play a critical role in how informants assess recreational sport participants' skill levels. The second group of informants considered equal status to be present in recreational

sport settings. The following sections provide in-depth descriptions of these two groups.

Absence of equal status. The first group of informants believed that recreational sport participants possess different status according to their skill levels. Individuals possess different skill levels in sport activities, which shape a *hierarchical order* in informants' mind. For example, when one participant shows higher ability in a particular sport than another, that individual is perceived as a superior player while an individual who displayed poor performance is considered as an inferior player. This hierarchical order explains why some informants believe participants do not possess equal status in recreational sport settings.

It is important to note that racial stereotypes that informants hold seem to affect their recognition of others' skills. When asked the question, "When you participate in sport activity with racially mixed team, do you think everybody has equal status regardless of their racial background?" three informants expressed this point of view:

Absolutely not. No. No way. Unfortunately, Asian Americans are always starting towards the bottom. You have to prove yourself. But, with that being said, I think that's the status quo. That's the way our society works in general. It's not only in sports. In basketball, you see Black athlete, you presume they are better than you or better than most. You see an Asian, you presume they are probably not as good. You see White or Hispanic, you say, yeah they probably somewhere in between (I-6).

If you want to relate to basketball, if you go to a basketball court, and you see on court there is one group of African Americans playing basketball. And other side, there is a different court. There is a group of Americans, White people are playing. Then my first instinct is to go play with the White people because I feel like I won't be able to match up with skills of the Black people...even in a soccer, if there say, um, Hispanic because they're known as playing well, like Brazil, so, personally I feel little, personally I feel like there isn't any equality on the field. That's for me (I-1).

Maybe it is not equal in the sense that people perceive Asians not athletic. So

your participation should be based on your level of how good you are. But someone already has a mindset of Asian people not being athletic. Maybe that's already disadvantage even though they don't know your actual skills of basketball. That may affect, yeah, I think in most parts people play and get to see that, people realize that the guy is pretty good but the initial feeling is, he is not that good because he is an Asian (I-9).

Thus, informants felt that participants' different skill level establishes a different status hierarchy, and each individual's skill level is further judged by his racial background when actual skill level is unknown.

Informants felt that African Americans occupy the highest status in this situation. Consistent with previous studies, informants believe African Americans are physically stronger and exceptionally better at most sports, especially in basketball, than other races (Stone, Perry, & Darley, 1997). Informants considered African Americans to be "genetically" (I-6, I-10, I-11) or "naturally" (I-12) "fast and strong" (I-2) and "good at sports" (I-1, I-4, I-5, I-7).

Similarly, many informants said that "Americans," referring to Black and Whites individuals, have better ability in sports and longer stamina than Asians. Two informants stated,

What I realized when I played with Americans is, I don't have good endurance and physical strength, but I think Americans are physically very strong regardless of their basketball skills. They do a lot of hustle plays (I-12).

But I think generally Blacks and Whites are superior in basketball [compared to Asians] (I-11).

This characteristic is echoed by some informants' comments on preferred teammates when they want to improve their skill sets. Some informants play basketball with Americans when they want to test their skills and have a challenging atmosphere

because they believe that Americans are usually better than Koreans;

You will improve your skill if you play with Americans rather than playing with Koreans because their level is higher. So you will improve your skills (I-7).

It's mainly because Americans are better [at basketball]. I think Americans are better than Koreans, in average. Usually they are physically stronger than us and defense is, I don't know about offense but their defense is much intense and tougher than offense (I-12).

Hispanics were considered by informants to be good soccer players. The comments from a recreational soccer player illustrate this characteristic:

Researcher: So if you see somebody from Brazil or Hispanic people, you automatically think that they are pretty good [at soccer].

I-1: Yeah, I mean we will play with them but, I mean, in the back of my mind, I'm like "Man, this is gonna be a hard game."

Researcher: When you are in the team, which is racially heterogeneous, and let's say your teammates are, some of your teammates are Hispanics, then you will think that,

I-1: (Interruption) Oh, we are gonna win (chuckle). We are gonna do good. We are gonna have a chance to win.

Informants believed that Asians were perceived as the least competitive group in sport activities. An informant described how Asians are recognized as less athletic than others in the context of pickup basketball:

When we need to decide our team, there are two cases, the case you already have your teammates and the case that 10 people are assigned to their team by captains in each team. What I feel is, when the captain picks his teammates, tall guys are picked first. But when I consider race, Blacks and Whites get picked first and Asians are usually the last in the situation that people don't know each other... In the perspective of equality, if we say heights and all the physical conditions are same among different people, I can tell you that people prefer Blacks or Whites more than Asians for their teammates (I-11).

Although the origins of these racial stereotypes is not within the parameters of this study, several informants explained racial stereotypes in terms of genetic differences, emphasizing that certain races are inherently predisposed to higher performance in sports.

Informants illustrated such acquisitions of racial bias based on their experience at the basketball gym. They observed that a specific basketball court where the best players played was typically occupied by African Americans or Whites. Asians, on the other hand, were never seen playing on the “best” court (I-6, I-11).

Informants also discussed the effect of the mass media as a potential origin of racial stereotypes. Some informants stressed that people from European countries and South American countries are proficient in soccer due to the immense success of players in the World Cup and European soccer leagues. Similarly, they have watched professional basketball players in the African American-dominated NBA leagues, thus reinforcing perceptions that African Americans are more athletic than other races. One informant expressed how he has been influenced by the NBA and TV:

Um, I guess you can say TV has a lot to do with it. You know we see NBA. Ninety percent of players are African Americans and you know, if you watch their style of play, very athletic, dunks, you know, high flying, pass is very fast and, if you look at the White people in NBA, you can't see that that level of play. It's just different. So I guess we just get that preconceived notion that, yeah, even if the Black people aren't even playing basketball, if we see them at the court, I automatically think “Oh, we gotta go somewhere else to play” even if I've never even seen them play. That's the first thing I think. We gotta go somewhere else (I-1).

Similar to race, physical attributes are another assumed predictor of individual skill level. For example, informants judged a tall and muscular person to be a better basketball player than a small and skinny person. The following interview excerpt illustrates how physical attributes contribute to the way people judge the skill level of an individual:

Well, that goes all the way to like, that guy is pretty short so I don't want him, it's just instant, you have to judge somebody that you've never known, you've

never met him before, you've never seen him play. You can only judge someone based on his physical attributes. This guy is tall and has big muscles, but he might not be coordinated at all but you would probably pick him before the short guy (in pickup basketball). Assuming that everything is fair if you have a level headed person making judgment. I think those physical attributes probably outweigh the racial, when it is as far as the sport goes. If there is a tall, muscular Asian guy and short and White guy, you will still pick the Asian guy because it looks like he can play better (I-9).

Thus, informants considered that both racial background and physical attributes play a crucial role in determining individuals' ability in sport activities. Based on these two factors, one's status can either ascend or descend in different situations. For example, if an Asian plays pickup basketball with African Americans, he could be perceived as less competitive. However, if he is two or three feet taller and has much muscular body shape than other African Americans, he could be recognized as a superior player. The two factors seem to establish one's status in recreational sports context.

However, the significance of racial stereotypes and physical attributes are limited to the situation when participants' real abilities are unknown; their real ability is not identified until the first time they participate in a sport with strangers. A pickup game of basketball provides an example. At first, participants do not know each other and they lack an understanding of other participants' basketball abilities. The skill level of each participant is usually not visible the first time. Therefore, when people select their teammates from strangers, they have to rely on two visible factors - race and physical attributes - of others to acquire the best possible teammates and take advantage of their skill sets. The results of this study indicate that informants use both factors as typical criteria to predict a participant's ability during their initial encounters. However, once participants play and spend time together, each individual's ability becomes evident

based on actual observation and experience. This process is described by an informant's comments:

[I]f I'm taller or bigger than the others, we know the physicality that looks like "good at sports," if you have such physicality, you will get many passes at the beginning. But then, after a while, we start to realize the ability and characteristics of other players. Something like, 'Oh this guy is a little bit selfish and doesn't pass the ball' Or 'what is he doing? I don't even realize whether he exists in my team.' It's like a situation that there are five players in your team, but you feel like there are only four players. Then we don't pass to that guy (I-11).

As informants understand a player's real skill level, the importance of race and physical attributes fades away. This is illustrated by the following interview excerpt:

It's just about one's ability. Although we might evaluate others through their appearance at the first time, after we play one or two games together, I think one's skill level tells you everything. I like to play basketball with people who have similar level of skills with me. Color is not an issue [when I choose my teammates]. Neither is body build (I-11).

The informant identifies another critical factor, *longevity of contact*. A certain amount of time has to pass before participants are able to identify participants' real skill level. In other words, contact has to be sustained until people remove their biases and understand the actual ability of others. If a participant does not spend much time playing in a recreational sport setting, other participants will potentially be unable to gauge his skills.

In summary, informants felt that recreational sports participants construct a hierarchy among themselves according to their perceived skill level and the skill level of teammates. When playing sports with strangers, informants believed that one's skill level is presumed by racial stereotypes and physical attributes of the individual. The symbolic meanings of race and physical attributes are the salient factors that determine the participants' skill level when different groups of people start playing together. However,

the salience of the two factors disappears over time. As participants engage in multiple contacts and recognize each other's real skill level, eventually, skill level becomes the distinguishing criterion of a player's status. The hierarchical order that the informants constructed in their mind is the main reason that they perceive recreational sport settings as unequal play settings.

Presence of equal status. Although some informants doubt the presence of equal status in recreational sport settings, others believed there was equal status among different groups of people simply because they felt there was no bias or discrimination in terms of who could play. The informants who believe the presence of equal status stated that all recreational sports facilities were accessible regardless of their racial background or nationality. Due to the equal opportunities in participation, informants believed that they have equal status in recreational sport settings. This point of view is evident in a quote by an informant:

We wait until people on the court finish their game [when we go to play pickup basketball]. Then it's first come, first served. People don't exclude me from the court based on the fact that I'm not an American...because I was there first and waited for my turn. People would not deny my participation. Even if they don't let me in, I can go talk to them and insist that it's my turn. Then, I believe they would agree with me (I-12).

Presumably, this belief is rooted from the recreational facilities that the informants use. The majority of informants in this study use local facilities supported either by the university or the municipal government. Students and tax payers have the right to use these facilities regardless of their racial background or nationality. These locations possess strong institutional support, and access to the facilities is sanctioned.

Another reason that informants are optimistic about the presence of equal status

is that they consider the unequal skill level among participants as something *legitimate* in recreational sport settings. Some informants accept the unequal skill level as a natural aspect of sport activities. Therefore, they believe that different skill level does not necessarily create a hierarchical order of participants. Consider the following examples:

Researcher: You said that if someone has decent skills, he will receive more passes...if someone receives more passes than others, I assume that such situation might disturb the equality among participants. How do you think about that?

I-12: No, I don't think that's something disturbs the equality. It is a common thing that good player receives more passes than other players. In every sport, people tend to rely on the best player in their team. I don't think this fact creates any negative impact on equality among participants.

Because, skill is, good player usually holds the ball most of time. Five people do not equally occupy the ball even if five players play together. We can't say this is something disturbs equality because it always happens in basketball both in amateur and professional. Michael Jordan touches the ball a lot, thus he scores a lot, and that's why he receives passes a lot. Michael Jordan has the ball most of time. That's because of his ability and we can't say that is unequal. If you accept this kind of uneven ball circulation as a common thing, then I think nothing disturbs the equality in basketball (I-11).

In summary, informants' perceptions of equal status in recreational sport settings is divergent; a group of informants thinks that recreational sport settings do not satisfy equal status among participants while other informants believes they do. The first group of informants considered that participants are stratified by their skill level and the skill level is gauged by participants' racial background and physical attributes when strangers play together. The hierarchical order based on skill level of individuals is considered as the disturbance of equal status in recreational sport contexts. For the other group of informants, equal opportunities in participating recreational sports are the main reason that they believe the presence of equality in recreational sport settings. Indeed, these

informants consider the different skill level among participants does not necessarily mean different status among them. They discount the connection between different skill level and different status among participants.

Common Goal

Similar to equal status, two contrasting perspectives were articulated by study informants regarding perceptions of common goals. One group of informants believed that participants have a common goal, which is to win a game. Another group was skeptical about the existence of a common goal due to the different cultures and play atmospheres that exist among different racial groups,

Winning. Most informants stated that people have a common goal when they participate in recreational sports, which is winning. One example is the following response from an informant toward the question, “when you participate in sport activity with racially mixed team, do you think people have a common or similar goal?”

I mean when you play sport, our goal is to win. I think everybody else’s goal is to win also. You don’t play sports to lose. I think our common goal is to win. Maybe there are some people really want to win by a lot of points difference but then, us, we are more like just win (I-10).

The study data revealed that the nature of team sports contributes to the formation of this belief. The most commonly participated sports mentioned by informants were either basketball or soccer. Both sports consist of two teams competing against one another, with the outcome consisting of a winning team and losing team. The innate competition factor in team sports seems to endow participants winning as an overarching task that different group of people can commonly share and try to achieve simply because winning provides more satisfaction and pleasure than losing. “You don’t

play sports to lose” (I-10), and “it’s never good feeling to be on a losing team” (I-2):

These ideas are illustrated by the following quote:

I-8: In my case, I think it’s like this. When I decide to go to gym to play basketball, my purpose can be meeting people, keeping myself healthy, and maintaining my basketball skills and stuffs like that. I don’t consider winning. But the purpose of playing basketball game is to win.

Researcher: In the actual moment that you play basketball?

I-8: Ye, Yes. Winning is the goal. But my purpose is not winning while I go to the gym. The purposes are more like network or health and other things before I actually play basketball.

Researcher: Then how winning becomes a common goal once you involve in a game? Do your initial motives disappear? Do you simply forget about your intentions?

I-8: I guess that is sports, it would be different if we talk about music or arts, sports has a dynamic that divide the people into winner and loser...because there is a winner and loser in sports. I think that’s why. ... Not only about winning and losing but, I guess it’s about competition. Sport is about competition, right?

Therefore, informants stated that winning becomes more salient than their initial motives of participation. Informants reported various motives when asked to identify why they played sports (How did you start this sport? What’s the purpose of participating in sports and why do you like sports?). Their motives included: (1) physical exercise: “I really needed the exercise” (I-3), (2) socialization: “I just like having fun with my friends, that’s probably the first reason” (I-10), (3) Love of sports: “It’s almost beautiful that you can mix all of different various skills and so be able to make a game out of it essentially” (I-6), (4) Refreshment: “Running and kicking a ball, and come back home, it is a great refreshment” (I-7). No respondent explicitly mentioned that winning was their primary motive for participating. However, when informants were asked if there a common goal exists in playing sports with different racial groups, all informants answered that winning was a common goal. The results indicate that the competition factor in team

sports seems to provide a winning as a common task among participants, and this task outweighs each individual's initial intentions in sports arena.

The limited space for sport activity is also associated with the pursuit of winning. An informant mentioned that the “rule” of the basketball court where he plays is “winner stays” (I-10). The winning team remains on the court and competes against another team while the losing team must wait for another opportunity or move to another court if too many teams are waiting. If a participant wants to play, he has to be a part of the winning team. The limitation of available space can act as a factor that pushes participants to play hard.

Along with winning, several informants pointed out that recreational sports provide an opportunity to socialize with others who enjoy a common activity. Most informants are involved in sports clubs. They regularly participate in club meetings and play sports with their club members not only because they enjoy sports but also because participation provides a social outlet for group members:

All I want was just get together because we are in college, it's not like a high school where we can...we share same classes, you know, so, we don't have that much time to get together, so pretty much more like, you know, get together and have some fun, that s like a basic reason [for participating in sports activities] (I-3).

Informants solidified social bonds and friendships with club members and maintain networks via sports. Thus, sociability occurs within the recreational sports context and instills a sense of camaraderie among club members. It also means that informants may put less value on socialization when they play with total strangers (e.g.. pickup basketball with strangers) because they do not share a sense of belonging.

John stated that winning and fun are common goals that different group of people share in recreational sport activities. He presented his opinion about the existence of common goal in recreational sports as following:

Well, yes, I do believe we have a common goal, which is to win the game. But since this is not like a professional field, they, like, half is trying to have fun. But the other half, they want to win, so basically, even though we have different background, when we are playing sports, specifically soccer, yes, we do have a common goal which is to win and to have fun.

Two common goals that John identified seem to be interrelated. The following interview excerpt illustrates the relationship between winning and enjoyment as well as the relationship between winning and other motives of participating in sports:

I-11: There are many different purposes [of playing sports] but if we talk about sports that have competition nature, such as basketball, soccer, pools, and softball, there is a different mood when we win and lose. It's like a gambling. You will have fun when you win but no fun if you lose...we do hi-five and say "good job" more frequently with strangers when we win. So winning can be a facilitator of other motives. Thus, if you win, you would have much smooth atmosphere to talk to others while you don't want to talk to somebody when you lose because you might think like "we lost because of him." So, not everybody play sports to win. However, although people have different purposes of participation, winning goes with them inevitably when we play sports with competition nature.

...Researcher: Because people are pleased by winning, accomplishment of other purposes are also facilitated,

I-11: Yes, people probably talk to each other more [when they win], like "hey, that was nice try" or "your pass was great" things like that.

This exchange revealed that winning provides great pleasure to participants and this pleasure facilitates positive interaction among participants and helps to accomplish the other purposes of sports participation such as socializing. Therefore, there seem to be close connection between winning and the enjoyment that participants can obtain from sport activities. Moreover, informant stated that, compared to losing, winning facilitates

positive interracial contact compared to losing.

However, John indicated that winning is not associated with enjoyment and pleasure in every situation. John's following comments illustrate that winning and enjoyment are not always associated:

So you have to call up on three people [because there are not enough people to play basketball] but you have a lot of friends,...who are you going to call? It starts out with person who is best at basketball,...there is a category. And there is [an order among your friends that] you are gonna start calling from, right? And [you will start to call your friends] who is good at basketball, because you want to have fun and because if you want to enjoy the game, the person you are gonna call, their ability [needs to] be better than [you], that's where it comes to ability.

John's comments provide an insightful analysis to explain that having fun may be more deeply associated with participants' skill level rather than winning. This is confirmed by another informant's reflections on the relationship between winning and fun:

One day, I went to play basketball by myself and I played with really good players. We won every game because my teammates were so good, but I didn't have many chances to touch the ball because my skill level was too low compared to others. So it was, of course winning gave me a good feeling but, I felt like, I was not even in the team...Although we shared the winning as a common goal at that time, I was almost excluded from the process of pursuit of victory. Then, it's not fun, isn't it? I play but it's not fun... it may depend on individual but I don't think we can say such situation is fun (I-11).

Thus, John and other informants insist that winning a game and enjoying a game are described as different goals even if they are closely related. Although informants consider winning as a common goal, they indicated that it cannot be at the expense of other things such as fun. If a participant wants to enjoy recreational team sports, he/she needs to play with people who have similar or even better skill levels. If there is too wide of a gap among participants' skill levels, the participants may not enjoy the game.

No common goal. Only a few informants doubted the existence of a common goal in recreational sport settings. JeeHun is a representative example. JeeHun was originally born in South Korea and moved to United States when he was four years old. He started to play basketball when he was a freshman in college. He is now 30 years old and does not play basketball as actively as he did in his college years. However, I personally have observed his exceptional performance and learned that a famous head coach of a Korean professional basketball team wanted JeeHun to play for him. JeeHun told me that he used to exclusively play on the so called “Black court” where the majority of players are African Americans. Based on his experience and observation, JeeHun described his skepticism toward the existence of the common goal because he believes that Asians and Asian Americans have more serious attitudes toward sport activities than other races:

Researcher: When you participate in sport activity with racially mixed team, do you think people have a common goal or similar goal?

JeeHun: No. I don’t actually. I would say, I think that Asian community in particular has, they usually have an agenda when they play basketball to truly win. They are more competitive that they truly wanna win and they wanna excel their own ability. I’ve seen them being they’re a lot more competitive and passionate about what they do... the Caucasian and White Americans, most of them to me I really get the sense of that they are out there just have a fun. Just to, you know, break a sweat as I would say. But a lot less competitive. African Americans...they don’t even have a lot of competitive atmosphere so on that I see in Asian Americans. I really believe that Asian Americans have much more of competitive nature [than Blacks or Whites]. To not only win the game, but also do improve their own skill sets than any other races I’ve seen out there. It’s just my personal observation.

Researcher: I see, I see, interesting. So you think each race group has different atmosphere and goal.

JeeHun: Yes, Absolutely...I know it’s not just sports but I think, Asian American general, and I think also specifically for Koreans as well, there is this innate, there is this innate feature about them that makes them wanna be the best that they can be almost anything they do. It’s almost never good enough to

be just average in what they do. If they usually get into certain activity, they try their best to get, be the best at that.

JeeHun supported his idea using the 2008 Beijing Olympics as an example. The Republic of Korea won 31 medals and finished in seventh place in the overall medal standings (The official website of Beijing 2008 Olympic Games). JeeHun was certain that South Koreans achieved this result because of their passion for being on top of their field. He emphasized that the country's number of medals, relative to its population, is high among participating nations. JeeHun utilized Asians and Asian Americans' obsession-like seriousness with winning and being the best and stressed that there is no common goal because different race groups have different goals when they participate in recreational sports.

Similar to JeeHun, several study informants articulated that they observed a different climate, culture, and even different rules among different race groups even though they still believe winning is the common goal in recreational sport settings. Two examples are drawn from the data. First, an informant described harsh manners of Hispanics when playing soccer. The interview excerpts below provide a glimpse of his experience:

I-2: Recently, last Sunday, when we played our last game, there were, majority of teams were Hispanic. Right before the game, our coach which was my friend, she was like “ok, there is a bunch of Hispanic people. It would be a tough game” it’s like an immediate response that just kind of comes to people. But if you actually watch Mexican soccer, like Mexican soccer club league, that’s generally how they play. *Researcher:* Really?

I-2: Yeah, they play really rough, they tend to nothing really happen but they fall, they said they hurt.

Researcher: Wow, interesting. So I guess there is some kind of different culture. Yeah, different culture. You can say it’s stereotype but you see it quite often enough to where you can just pick it up immediately.

Another informant described individualistic and straightforward atmosphere of the American basketball court. This informant perceived that Americans focused more on one-on-one match ups, whereas Koreans cared about the overall performance of the team. Moreover, Americans verbally expressed their anxiety and what they want other teammates to do aggressively while such behavior is considered rude and inappropriate among Koreans. While it is believed that individualism is a representative American value and collectivism is a Southeast Asian countries' key value (Ferraro, 1998), both values seems to reflected in recreational sports contexts.

He further described the existence of different rules according to different groups of people. What surprised this informant was, upon arriving in the United States and playing basketball with Americans, he noticed different sets of rules pertaining to foul calls and the manner in which a game resumed. In recreational basketball in Korea, the foul call was usually made by the player who commits a foul. However, in the United States, the foul was called by the player who receives a foul. Similarly, in Korea, people resume a game without any confirmation when the game was temporarily stopped due to a foul or out of bound while the offensive team has to pass the ball to the defensive team and conducts a "check" to confirm whether the defensive team is ready to resume play in the United States.

Again, although these different atmosphere, cultures, and rules were reported by several informants, those differences do not really impact the way informants perceive the existence of a common goal in recreational sport settings except in the case of JeeHun. The majority of informants still consider winning as the common goal among

recreational sport participants. Informants also perceived not only winning but also socializing and having fun as other common goals; some informants considered winning as the only common goal while other informants believed the existence of multiple shared goals in recreational sport settings. Similar to the case of equal status condition, informants' perception toward the existence of common goal varies.

Cooperation

Insight into the cooperation condition in recreational sport settings was also provided through this study. Similar to the previous two optimal conditions, informants were divided into two categories; one category does not believe that participants cooperate while another category believes that they do. Participants' skill level plays the most critical role in distinguishing whether or not informants perceived the existence of cooperation condition. The details of each category and the role of skill level in cooperation condition are discussed below.

Teammates' skill level. One group of informants was doubtful about the presence of cooperation conditions. They articulated that cooperation is largely contextual based on the team's composition. The most significant factor which makes the cooperation condition inconsistent is *teammates' skill level*. This is underscored by an informant's response to the question: "When you participate in sport activity with racially mixed team, do you think your teammates try to cooperate with each other and do team play?"

I-12: I think, at the beginning of a game we observe how my teammates are doing for five to 10 minutes because we don't know each other. We watch others. I think.

Researcher: Observation

I-12: Yes, because I don't know about my team. After that, I think people who have certain level of skills do team plays. If I'm terrible in basketball, nobody

let me in. I am not gonna get a pass. I don't think that I don't receive a pass because I'm an Asian.

Researcher: Ok, it's because you are not that good,

I-12: You can't involve in team plays that your team does because your skill is not good enough.

Researcher: That means you have to have a certain level of skills.

I-12: My team has to have a certain level of skills to do team plays.

Researcher: Ok, so the teammates need to have similar level of ability, but if one person is exceptionally good or terribly bad,

I-12: He can't bend in his team.

Researcher: Ok, I see what you mean. In other words, this is case by case.

I-12: Yes

Thus, a significant part of team cooperation is the skill level of each teammate as well as the balance among them. It is difficult for participants to cooperate with their teammates if there is a wide gap among participants' abilities.

Understanding of teammates' skill level (longevity of contact). Since the cooperation among teammates depends on each player's skill level and balance among them, participants first have to acquire a proper understanding of the other players' skill levels in order to estimate whether teammates are capable of playing and working together; it is difficult to cooperate with someone without first knowing his ability. Therefore, similar to the equal status condition, the longevity of contact plays a key role. Informants should continue the contact until they understand the other players' real abilities. Along with understanding teammates' capabilities, participants must realize whether cooperation and team play can take place. This is echoed by another informant's response to the same question in the above:

I guess it's really depends because when you say recreational, for me if it's recreational like soccer, we are all friends. We are not like we just met, if it is a case which I have been in me and two three other people are playing soccer. There is another group of people playing. We never met. Then ok, let's play together. If we do in different teams, you tend to play, pass the ball to the person

that you know because you know what their capable of, you don't really know how they are gonna do. I guess the goal of, the initial goal is to win. Other nice like friendly thing but. You tend to pass the ball to someone who you know because it's safe (I-2).

Similarly, several informants expressed that they have better teamwork when they play basketball or soccer with intimate friends compared to strangers regardless of racial background. It is not because of the intimacy or friendships between them; rather, they have a better of understanding each other's ability. Therefore, informants' deeper understanding in players' capabilities leads to more cooperation within their team.

Idiosyncrasies. Idiosyncrasies of participants are another key factor which affects cooperation among participants. For example, being bossy and irritated about other players' poor performance obstructs the teamwork and harmony within a team. An informant described that everyone gets along, and the game is really enjoyable when "cool people" play together. However, if one good player becomes bossy and starts to "look down" on other players, the climate becomes more intense, and the likelihood of verbal insults between teammates may increase (I-1). Similarly, being selfish about the ball possession and scoring is regarded as the characteristic of a bad player who negatively impacts teamwork and overall team performance. If someone is a "ball hog" or if a player does not pass and continue to shoot over the ball, cooperation cannot take place, and he would not be welcomed by other participants (I-5). In the situation of a pickup game, participants are randomly selected to their team. It is hard to predict whether teammates are "cool people" or "ball hogs." Therefore, some informants consider that cooperation among teammates truly develops, or lacks, on a case-by-case basis.

Language proficiency. Language proficiency is the last factor identified in this study which impacts perceived cooperation. An informant articulated that verbal communication among teammates is a big part of team sports (I-2). If someone has difficulty delivering his thoughts to their teammates, cooperation may not be as strong compared to participants who do not have language barriers. Simply, the strategy or plan for the game cannot be shared among teammates because there is no communication tool. Thus, cooperation does not occur.

The presence of cooperation condition. The second group of informants believed that participants usually cooperate with his teammates even if they do not know each other. This phenomenon is deeply related to the characteristic of team sports. One player cannot control and do everything by himself in team sport settings. Rather, he has to pass the ball to other players and has to perform one of the tasks that is specifically allotted to his position. Therefore, informants believe at least there is some level of interdependence and cooperation among participants.

In summary, the majority of study informants believed that the presence of cooperation among recreational sport settings heavily depends on their teammates; thus, this condition may change in every situation. Teammates' skill levels, understanding teammates' skill levels, personalities, and language proficiency play key roles in determining whether informants perceive the existence of cooperation among participants.

Authority Support

This study found that Korean Americans expressed comfort in their interaction

with other racial groups in recreational sport settings. Informants explicitly expressed that authority power or institutional support exists in recreational sport settings and do not feel any fear or problem in their contact with different racial groups. In fact, several informants do not care whether authority power secures the interaction with other racial groups because they never felt or experienced discriminatory treatments in recreational sport activities. This is reflected in an informant's response to the question whether he feels support from authority power or social system in recreational sport settings:

I mean if I go to basketball court, they are not gonna say "you are an Asian. You can't play." They let you play... So there is not really, I don't know about long time ago but right now people really don't discriminate each other... They might be racist and hate Asians but they are not gonna show it. It's just sport not their life. They are not gonna put just everything in their life just to not play with them. Unless you are a really racist which I've never seen... I think there is nothing law provides more chance for people to play sports (I-10).

Some informants also expressed that they do not understand why the authority or law needs to operate to secure interracial contact in recreational sport settings because they believe recreational sport settings are free from racial discrimination or unequal treatment. Almost a half century has passed since the contact hypothesis was proposed. Although African Americans were not allowed to attend the same schools as White students, and the segregation between Whites and Blacks were visible in the era that Allport (1954) originally formulated the contact hypothesis, such blatant discrimination has been prohibited for several decades. Maybe racial tension has been attenuated since the enactment of the Civil Right Act (1964), thus participants do not even consider the necessity of security provided by law when they make interracial contact. Perhaps the social atmosphere has changed during this period, thus the contact hypothesis' authority

support condition is outdated in today's recreational sport settings.

However, it is also possible that the informants' attitudes toward the authority support condition are largely because of the recreational sports context that they have been exposed. Scott (2000) stated that there are still disenfranchised groups who are restricted their access to leisure services and resources because leisure service agencies downplay or ignore fears of discrimination and harassment. As the researcher mentioned earlier, most informants use facilities operated by government agencies for their sport activities. Equal opportunities for access to these facilities are firmly secured by law. As such informants were not aware of the necessity of authority power because they do not sense discrimination or unequal treatment.

Recreational Sports as the Tool for Social Integration

Although study informants perceive the presence of four optimal conditions differently in recreational sport settings, they strongly believe that recreational sports settings satisfy the friendship opportunity condition, thus it provides opportunities for participants to develop friendships. Furthermore, informants confirmed that recreational sport activity helps different racial groups build relationships and significantly contributes to social integration.

Friendship Opportunity

The study informants posited that recreational sport settings provide participants with the opportunity to become friends. Several informants were able to make friends from outside their racial group via sports. Some Korean-American immigrants stated that sports were actually a channel for making new friends upon arrival to America and

participating in sports with different racial groups helped them settle down in their new country.

When I first moved here [United States] at 8th grade, I was in a French class and our French teacher had a son. She said “do you like to play soccer?” and I said “yeah” and “you should try to play with my son’s club team.” And I went there and I was only Asian person there. But it was like my first week in school and I already made friends, which is really good feeling you know? (I-2)

Sports have been an awesome tool for me to make friends, especially with other races. It has given me a lot of confidence to socialize in the U.S. culture, society or community (I-8).

Social opportunity. It seems recreational sport contexts provide social opportunity to participants and such opportunity helps development of friendship. Different groups of people participating in same activity mean that they have a common focal point. It seems this common focal point provides more chances for interaction and makes different groups share something they can discuss and think about together. As an informant articulated, “playing basketball for three hours” does not mean that people only play basketball for three hours. Rather, chatting, watching a game, and drinking a sports beverage with people on the same court while waiting for next turn are part of the activity over the course of a three hours basketball game (I-11).

Skill level and friendship opportunity. An informant prudently mentioned the importance of skill level in order to make friends through recreational sport activities. If someone shows decent amount of skills, the other participants possess awe toward that individual and players ask him/she to play more. Conversely, if someone shows poor performance, the participants may not ask him to play again. How skill level affects the interaction among participants is illustrated below;

I-2: If they like the way he plays, they're gonna tell him to come up and play more often. May be even come and join the team or something like that. But if not, there are not gonna call him.

...*Researcher:* It sounds like racial issue doesn't really a matter. The point is how that individual plays with others, and how much skills and,

I-2: Yeah, how well, you guys can play well together. That really matters what I think. I mean I guess you could have like a first, initial instinct that "oh I think you will be good". Then you actually play with him and he is really bad and then [you will think] 'never mind. Don't call me again,' you know.

Researcher: So you think it really depends on the situation and how much skill level people have. You think that if people have similar skill level, people can get along with well.

I-2: Similar or maybe even better. Then you will be like "oh yeah, come with us"

Researcher: It sounds like some kind of respect from the other groups

I-2: Yeah, pretty much.

Therefore, if an individual displays the skill level that is similar with or even higher than other participants, he earns respect and people want to play and interact with him more. However, if his ability is less than other participants, people are indifferent to him, and he may lose further chances for interaction with other participants.

An individual's exceptional ability can even mitigate the language problem. An Informants pointed out language proficiency as a key factor that determines friendship opportunity in recreational sport settings. If participants cannot communicate smoothly, it may be hard for them to establish friendships simply because they cannot deliver and share their thoughts (I-10). However, some informants stressed that as long as one shows excellent skills, he may be attractive among participants because the most important matter in some play settings is skill level (I-6, I-7, I-11, I-12). In other words, "if you are good enough, you will be able to play through with any team" (I-5).

The Positive Impact on Social Harmony

The most salient theme which emerged from interview texts is consistent with

the findings from Pettigrew and Tropp's (2006) research. They posited that Allport's (1954) four optimal conditions usually enhance the positive effect of intergroup contact, yet they are not essential conditions for intergroup contact to achieve positive outcomes. Substantial number of comments from the informants illustrated that recreational sport settings not only provide friendship opportunities for participants but also contributes to harmonious integration of different peoples even if the situation does not satisfy Allport's optimal conditions completely. An informant who does not believe that recreational sport settings satisfy all four optimal conditions described how he established friendship through basketball:

I used to go to pickup basketball, every Saturday morning basketball. And, the first few weeks, I really didn't know the people so there was a lot of pushing and trash talking. But I went every Saturday and same people, I would see the same people at same court so after while we kind a got to know each other little bit. You know, it became more of friendly mach instead of competitiveness... Yes, I played basketball with a Hispanic guy, and it was about 2 years ago. I played every Saturday morning with him. And I started working so I kind of lost a contact but, he found me somehow on Facebook (a famous social networking website), you know, we starts to talking again and since I can't go play basketball he comes visit me at work at night so (I-1).

Pettigrew (1998) stated that intergroup contact requires time for cross-group friendship to be established. From this interview excerpt, the importance of repeated contact is confirmed again. Initially the informant did not receive favorable attention from a group of people on the basketball court. After he continuously played with same group, he was accepted and could establish friendship with one Hispanic participant.

JeeHun and another informant enthusiastically expressed how participating in sport activities with different racial groups can provide positive impact on interracial relationship via their response to the question: *"Do you think sport activity helps*

different group of people to get along together?”

Oh yeah. No doubt about it. I mean the principle behind Olympics is that. You know, that's the main reason why Olympics even exist, right? Sports in general is, I think it's the closest thing you can get the most number of people to be as close as possible as an even playing field in terms of life in general. Language, you know huge differences, Culture, there is huge differences. Just general life style, huge differences. But in sports, there are sat rules, sat dynamics within sports that are pretty universal, pretty paramount throughout the world. So I mean, you talk about basketball in [this town] and you talk about basketball in Seoul, Korea, they both know what they're talking about. They're talking about same sport. It's the one sport that, I mean sport in general one thing that, one person who knows absolutely nothing about the other culture can get together and still...*Play together?* Right. You know sports. Sports can do that...Sports, I mean, you name anything else you know, in life that can do the same thing that sports can do as far as unifying different culture and age groups and all that, that'll be the day that hell freezes over. I mean there is nothing else other than sports that can really do that.

Yeah, definitely. It is because a lot of times that is only interactions that they have with other races. Because you are kind of forced to play together. Basketball is a very popular sport. Koreans, White people, in daily life you probably never get that close, just physically. You have to guard them or you have to play with them. So that's probably one of the few times that you are forced to interact with someone of a different race although you are not used to it. I can't think other than going classes or something like that but, even in the class you go to class and choose to ignore people, you know what I mean? But when you play sport together you have to interact and force to. So I think it is definitely positive thing (I-9).

Both informants' comments are revealing. They suggested that recreational sport settings are the stage where different people can interact and actively participate regardless of their background. The study informants' enthusiastic support to the idea that sport is a vehicle for social harmony makes the importance of optimal conditions' existence in recreational sport settings questionable. Consistent with the findings from Pettigrew and Tropp (2000) and Pettigrew and Tropp (2006), interracial contact within recreational sport settings positively impacts interracial relationships even though all optimal

conditions are not satisfied.

Chapter Summary

This chapter illustrated the lived experience of interracial contact that Korean Americans experience when they participate in recreational sports. The main focus of the chapter was to determine whether they perceive the existence of optimal conditions in recreational sport settings and whether the interracial contact in recreational sport settings contributes to positive relationships between contact participants. Interview texts obtained from the study informants were utilized to analyze these two themes.

The study findings began with a discussion of informants' perception toward four optimal conditions proposed by Allport (1954). The individual's perception toward the presence of each optimal condition is mainly determined by six key factors identified in this study. They are: (1) skill level, (2) racial stereotypes, (3) physical attributes, (4) language proficiency, (5) different atmosphere or culture among different racial groups, and (6) longevity of contact. These factors play by themselves or interact with each other and construct the perceptions toward the existence of optimal conditions. The most critical factor throughout all optimal conditions is skill level. A salient theme emerging from the first part of this chapter is the inconsistency in recreational sport participants' perception toward optimal conditions. It is both a highly personal and subjective matter.

The second part of this chapter concerns friendship opportunity and social integration via recreational sports. In contrast to the first discussion, the perception toward these two elements was almost identical among informants. All informants supported the idea that recreational sport settings provide the opportunity for different

racial groups to become friends. Moreover, all informants believed that recreational sport is one of the best ways that different groups of people can unify. A salient theme emerged from the second discussion is that recreational sport activities can be a vehicle for harmony among different group of people.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this study was to gain richer insights into the phenomenon of interracial contact that Korean Americans experience in recreational sport settings. Three research questions were proposed in order to achieve this goal: (1) Do Korean Americans perceive the presence of the contact hypothesis' optimal conditions in recreational sport settings? (2) What kind of factors influences Korean Americans' perception toward the presence or absence of optimal conditions? (3) Can participating in recreational sports with different racial groups contribute to interracial harmony? Although the first and second research questions were answered in this study, the third remains unanswered.

Since little research of this sort has been undertaken in leisure studies, I synthesized two bodies of research: (1) social psychology literature pertaining to the contact hypothesis (Allport, 1954; Dovidio, Gaertner, & Kawakami, 2003; Pettigrew, 1998) and (2) sociology of sports literature dealing with interracial contact (Chu, & Griffey, 1985; McClendon, & Eitzen, 1975; Miracle, 1981; Rees, & Miracle, 1984). This chapter provides the summary and discussion of findings as well as recommendations for future studies.

Summary of Findings and Discussion

The study of Korean Americans' interracial contact experience in recreational sport settings revealed that informants held variable perceptions toward the presence of Allport's (1954) optimal conditions. However, study informants strongly supported the

existence of friendship opportunities, the fifth optimal condition currently suggested by researchers (Pettigrew, 1998; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006). More specifically, informants felt that participating in recreational sports with different racial groups contributes to harmonious interracial relations. This study identified six key factors that play a critical role in the formulation of informants' perceptions. They were: (1) skill level, (2) racial stereotypes, (3) physical attributes of recreational sport participants, (4) language proficiency, (5) atmosphere or culture within different recreational sport contexts, and (6) longevity of contact. The phenomenological approach used for this study offered insight into the rich complexity of the interracial contact in recreational sport settings.

Equal Status: Status Hierarchy and Skill Level

The informants revealed two contrasting opinions toward the existence of equal status conditions. While some informants believed that equal status among participants is satisfied in recreational sport settings, some informants believed that equal status is problematic because judgments are made about participants' skill levels. Participants' perceptions of skill level are influenced by players' race and apparent physical attributes. This is particularly the case when other players' skill level is unknown. This finding is consistent with ideas put forward by Rees and Segal (1984). They argued that "a known status hierarchy" exists on an organized sport team because athletes are stratified according to their performance. Why recreational sports participants construct status hierarchy in their conscious can be explained by expectation status theory.

Expectation status theory seeks to explain the development of status hierarchies in situations where individuals are oriented toward the achievement of a collective goal

or task (Correll & Ridgeway, 2003). According to Correll and Ridgeway (2003), “the shared focus of group members on the group’s goal generates a pressure to anticipate the relative quality of each member’s contribution to accomplishing the task in order to decide how to act” (p. 31). When group members anticipate that a specific individual will make more contributions than others for their task accomplishment, they will likely defer more to this individual and give her or him more opportunities to participate. Correll and Ridgeway stated, “In this way, relative performance expectations create and maintain a hierarchy of participation, evaluation, and influence among the actors that constitutes the group’s status hierarchy” (p.31).

Findings from this study show that similar expectations guide the behavior of recreational sport participants. Informants felt that winning was an overarching group goal in the recreational sport settings in which they participated. This shared goal meant that players act towards other players on the basis of their presumed ability to achieve success. As noted, however, this is problematic when participants do not know other players’ skills. Korean informants felt their racial background and body type were used against them by other players (e.g., they may not receive many passes in a basketball game). This relative performance expectation shapes informants’ perceptions of an unfavorable status hierarchy in recreational sport settings.

Notably, it is possible that one racial group has different status hierarchy in different recreational sports. Informants articulated that Hispanics are considered good soccer players while African Americans are regarded as superior basketball players than any other racial groups. They have stereotypes that certain racial groups are good at

certain sports. Therefore, certain racial groups' status in recreational sport settings may change according to kind of sports that they participate.

Moreover, informants noted that status hierarchy in recreational sport settings may change according to the amount of time that participants play together. The longer they participated in a given recreational sport context, other participants were able to evaluate their actual ability. This means the status hierarchy based on racial stereotypes undergoes a process of confirmation or disconfirmation. Informants felt that their status, over time, was much more a function of their actual skills than their race.

Presumably, both confirmation and disconfirmation processes have different effects on interracial relations. On the one hand, confirmation is expected to maintain or strengthen racial stereotypes, thus providing trivial or even a negative impact on long-term interracial relationship. On the other hand, researchers have indicated that disconfirmation can produce positive impact as a result of interracial contact. Disconfirmation in recreational sport settings is similar to the concept of personalization in studies of interracial contact. Personalization means that of individuals are not categorized solely as members of their group (Brewer & Miller, 1984).. Instead, they are categorized as individuals. Brewer and Miller (1984) and Miller (2002) have shown that development of personalized representations in contact situations produces more favorable attitudes toward individuals and reduces intergroup bias. Therefore, if an Asian Americans demonstrates less skill level in a recreational sport, other participants will confirm their bias that Asian Americans are athletically inferior and their attitudes will likely remain unchanged. If he or she displays exceptional proficiency in sports, however,

participants will disconfirm their bias and will positively change or even discard previously held racial stereotypes.

The critical question here is what happens if recreational sports participants do not let Asian Americans have sufficient opportunities to play? Since Asian Americans are perceived as less athletic than other racial groups, they are the least preferred teammates in recreational sport settings (I-11). Moreover, Asian Americans may receive fewer passes and may not occupy the ball as much as other players because participants tend to distribute more passes to a teammate who appears to be a superior player during their initial encounters (I-11, I-12). In other words, Asian Americans have more difficulty in being recognized as decent players because it takes them longer to display their actual abilities and disconfirm the racial biases that other participants' hold. In this regard, Asian Americans are disadvantaged in recreational sport settings compared to other racial groups. This circumstance negatively impacts two other optimal conditions of the contact hypothesis which are closely related to individual's skill level – problems to which I now turn.

Cooperation and Friendship Opportunities

Although some study informants believed that different racial groups cooperate with each other in recreational sport activities due to the nature of team sports other informants expressed that cooperation among participants depends on their skill level, personality, and language proficiency. While Rees and Miracle (1984) argued that cooperation does not take place in organized team sports when players hold independent positions that do not require much dependency on other players, this study did not

identify the significance of players' positions in terms of cooperation among recreational sports participants. Instead, similar to equal status condition, informants felt that racial stereotypes were a potential problem for cooperation to take place on a team. Informants thought that they needed to possess similar skill level as others if cooperation was to occur. In general, it is difficult for participants to cooperate fully with their teammates if there is a wide gap among participants' abilities. Additionally, a certain amount of time has to go by before participants understand other players' real abilities and figure out whether or not their teammates are truly capable of playing as a team. In this regard, informants felt that their American counterparts did not see them as worthy of full cooperation. They felt that other participants played among themselves and did not distribute the ball equitably because they were seen as inferior players. Again, Asian players had to spend a great deal of time proving to other participants that they were capable and skilled players.

Since Asian Americans may have fewer chances to engaging in team play and cooperation compared to other participants, they may have fewer opportunities to become friends with other racial groups in recreational sport settings. Sherif et al. (1988) Robbers Cave experiment showed that different groups of people establish in-group bonding when they pursue a superordinate goal - a goal that is beneficial for both groups but one that cannot be achieved without full cooperation. While winning can be considered a superordinate goal in sports context (McClendon & Eitzen, 1975; Miracle, 1981), Asian Americans may have difficulties establishing strong bonds with other participants because teammates are skeptical about their ability and not allow them to be

actively involved in pursuit of superordinate goal.

Moreover, participants may be indifferent to interacting with Asian Americans. Although informants strongly believe that recreational sport settings provide the opportunities for different groups of people to become friends, some informants articulated that one's skill level plays an important role in friendship opportunities. They insisted that if an individual displays prominent skill level, he earns respect and people want to play and interact with him. Again, since Asian Americans are considered poor athletes and have more difficulties in being recognized as decent players, other participants may choose to avoid interactions with them.

Overall, Asian Americans suffer many disadvantages in recreational sport settings due to racial stereotypes. They are located at the bottom of status hierarchy because of their identification as unskillful players. They also have more difficulty blending in to the team and conducting team play. Moreover, the opportunities for interaction and developing friendships with other racial groups are comparatively limited. In order to overcome these constraints and make positive interracial contact in recreational sport settings, Asian Americans have to persevere and put forward extra effort to show that they possess sufficient skills to play with anybody.

Common Goal and Different Culture

Similar to McClendon and Eitzen (1975) and Miracle's (1981) research on organized sport settings, this study shows that the majority of informants considered winning to be a shared goal in recreational sport settings. The competitive nature of team sports contributes to the formation of this belief. However, some informants thought that

sociability and “having fun” were also common goals that recreational sport participants share. These common goals were not reported by previous literature and may be limited in recreational sport settings. Interestingly, “having fun” does not necessarily stem directly from winning. Rather, enjoyment of participating sport activities comes from playing with people who have similar or better skill levels.

One informant previously called “JeeHun” doubted the existence of common goal in recreational sport settings due to his belief that each racial group has different intentions or purposes for playing sports, thus making it difficult to establish a common goal. Although other informants still believe winning is a common goal, they also reported that different climates, cultures, and rules exist in recreational sport settings according to different racial groups.

Authority Support

This study found that Korean Americans expressed comfort in their interaction with other racial groups in recreational sport settings. Informants expressed that institutional support exists in recreational sport settings and that their race did not bar them participating in sports with other racial groups. This finding can be explained by two possible assumptions. First, the social atmosphere of recreational sports has changed since Allport (1954) originally formulated the contact hypothesis a half century ago, an era when blatant segregation and discrimination were allowed. Thus, the contact hypothesis’ authority support condition could be an outdated concept in today’s recreational sport settings. Second, informants have access to recreational facilities that are provided by tax payers. These places are relatively open and access to these facilities

is strongly sanctioned. The informants stated that they never experienced discrimination or harassment based on racial background. Therefore, the finding may be simply rooted in the characteristics of facilities that informants have used where strong authority power exists.

Recreational Sports and Social Integration

Pettigrew and Tropp's (2006) research illuminated that Allport's (1954) four optimal conditions usually enhance the positive effect of intergroup contact, yet they are not essential conditions for intergroup contact to achieve positive outcomes. Moreover, they further articulated that interracial contact usually helps alleviate racial tension and contributes to the establishment of intergroup harmony. The most salient theme emerging from this study is consistent with these two notions. Many comments from informants illustrated that recreational sport settings not only provide friendship opportunities for participants but also contributes to harmonious integration of different groups even if the situation does not satisfy Allport's optimal conditions completely.

In many contexts of American life, Korean immigrants can avoid interactions with other racial groups. Moreover, there are a number of factors that prevent Korean immigrants from experiencing meaningful contact with Americans, including differences in culture, life styles, and language. Informants felt strongly that, recreational sport settings provide one context where such differences are largely irrelevant. They felt that recreational sport settings allow different people to participate in the same activities, follow the same rules, and strive toward a common set of goals. Moreover, some informants stated that participating in recreational sport activities was the one area in life

that allowed them to strike up friendships with members of other racial groups. These friendships were formed even shortly after immigration and despite having weak English skills.

These characteristics of recreational sports are consistent with the findings from Stodolska and Alexandris' (2004) study. They reported that some Korean immigrants had established inter-racial friendships through sports. Moreover, several Polish immigrants in their study stated that the first time they interacted with White Americans was during sport and recreational activities (p.401). Recreational sport settings seem to provide a relatively safe context where different racial groups can interact and develop friendships.

Limitations of the Study

This study possesses several limitations. First, this study's methodology does not permit the generalization of its findings to an entire population. Since the purpose of naturalistic study is not the generalization of its outcomes, but to provides deep insight into the phenomenon, study findings may be limited to the context of this study. Therefore whether or not the outcomes of this study can be transferable to other studies depends on the future researchers.

Second, although the research interviews yielded rich insight into the interracial contact experience in recreational sport settings, this study only represent males' perspectives. Third, the interpretation of interview texts obtained from study informants are subject to interpretive bias. Although the researcher articulated his own background and interracial contact experiences in Chapter III, researcher's "insider" position within the studied population and his biases may impact the way study data

interpreted. Distinguishing such possibility is a task for future researchers.

Recommendation for Future Research

The findings and limitations of this study suggest a number of recommendations for future research. First, one future study could investigate whether the existence of status hierarchy in recreational sport settings is shared by other racial groups. Obtaining other racial groups' perspective toward the existence of equal status condition and status hierarchy will help to provide a deeper understanding of the nature of interracial contact in recreational sport settings.

Another future study could explore the interracial contact which occurs during physical exercise activities that do not require competition, such as joggings and weight lifting. The majority of study informants play basketball, soccer, or both. Although some researchers investigated the impact of interracial contact during leisure activities (Shinew, Glover, and Parry; 2004), the research on this topic is sparse. Investigating interracial contact within noncompetitive physical activities is recommended to gain more complete picture of the impact of interracial contact during leisure activities.

Third, as noted almost all study informants used recreational facilities located on a University campus or university town. While all study informants believed the existence of authority support condition, acquiring study samples from more diverse locations will help to see whether the finding are regionally biased.

Fourth, future study could examine the existence of different atmosphere and culture among different racial groups in organized team sport settings. Investigating whether current findings are limited in recreational sport settings as well as how such

differences influence the contact situation may be interesting research agendas.

Finally, future study could investigate more heterogeneous gender group and adopt women's insight toward interracial contact in recreational sport settings. Previous studies reported that boys and girls of South Asian origin have different characteristics of leisure pursuit (Carrington, Chievers, & Williams, 1987; Taylor & Hegarty, 1985). Women's interracial contact experience, preferring sport activities, sports participation patterns, and attitude toward other racial groups may be different with those of men. Investigation on women's perspective is expected to deepen our understanding of interracial contact within the context of recreational sport settings.

Conclusions

The purpose of this study was to gain richer insights into the phenomenon of interracial contact that Korean Americans experience in recreational sport settings. The study results showed that each study informant perceives the existence of the contact hypothesis' optimal conditions differently. Therefore, it is problematic to lump up each individual's different perception and generalize whether contact situation satisfies optimal conditions or not. The study results also displayed that satisfaction of the contact hypothesis' optimal conditions is not necessary for positive interracial contact to occur. The study informants strongly believed that participating in recreational sports with different racial groups significantly contributes to interracial relationship.

However, they also indicated that not only Korean Americans but Asian Americans in general are potentially the most disadvantaged group from the positive impact of interracial contact in recreational sports. Due to racial stereotype that Asians

are not as athletic as other races, they can have more difficulty in occupying a higher position in the status hierarchy in recreational sport settings, to cooperate with teammates, and to take advantage of friendship opportunities that recreational sports provide. Asian Americans may have to put extra effort to prove their skill level and be accepted on recreational play settings.

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APPENDIX A
INTERVIEW CONSENT FORM

CONSENT FORM**Exploring Korean Americans' Interracial Contact Experiences during Recreational Sport Activities****Introduction**

The purpose of this form is to provide you information that may affect your decision as to whether or not to participate in this research study. If you decide to participate in this study, this form will also be used to record your consent.

You have been asked to participate in a research project studying the characteristics of interracial contact during recreational sport activities. The purpose of this study is to examine whether individuals perceive certain conditions when they participate in recreational sports with racially mixed teams. You were selected to be a possible participant because the subject of this research is Korean American recreational sport participants.

What will I be asked to do?

If you agree to participate in this study, you will be asked to participate in interview and answer several questions from the researcher. This interview process will take about 45 to 60 minutes. Your participation will be audio recorded.

What are the risks involved in this study?

The risks associated in this study are minimal and are not greater than risks ordinarily encountered in daily life. You may feel uncomfortable to answer some interview questions because some of questions are potentially related to racial stereotype or prejudice issues. However, the researcher will ensure your privacy and will try his best to make you feel comfortable.

What are the possible benefits of this study?

You will receive no direct benefit from participating in this study. However, this study will provide many practical implications for recreational sport management and policy decisions.

Do I have to participate?

No. Your participation is voluntary. You may decide not to participate or to withdraw at any time without your current or future relations with Texas A&M University being affected.

Who will know about my participation in this research study?

This study is confidential, and collected data will be destroyed five years after the interview. The records of this study will be kept private. No identifiers linking you to this study will be included in any sort of report that might be published. The research records will be stored securely in a locked file cabinet, and only the interviewer, KangJae Lee, and his adviser, David Scott, will have access to the records.

If you choose to participate in this study, you will be audio recorded. Any audio recordings will be stored securely and only KangJae Lee will have access to the recordings. Any recordings will be kept for three years and then erased.

Whom do I contact with questions about the research?

If you have questions regarding this study, you may contact to

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Whom do I contact about my rights as a research participant?

This research study has been reviewed by the Human Subjects' Protection Program and/or the Institutional Review Board at Texas A&M University. For research-related problems or questions regarding your rights as a research participant, you can contact these offices at (979)458-4067 or irb@tamu.edu.

Signature

Please be sure you have read the above information, asked questions and received answers to your satisfaction. You will be given a copy of the consent form for your records. By signing this document, you consent to participate in this study.

Signature of Participant: _____ Date: _____

Printed Name : _____

Signature of Person Obtaining Consent: _____ Date: _____

Printed Name: _____

APPENDIX B
INTERVIEW GUIDE

Date:
 Location:
 Time of interview:
 Name of interviewee:
 Gender (Male, Female)

I'm interested in learning about interracial contact that Korean Americans experience during recreational sport activities. More specifically, I am interested in learning about your recreational sport experiences with other racial groups and so forth. I would like to begin the interview by asking you the background about yourself.

1. Can you briefly tell me about yourself?
 - Age
 - Birthplace
 - Period that stay in the U.S.
 - Occupation
 - Education level
2. From 1(very uncomfortable) to 10 (very comfortable), how much do you feel comfortable to communicate in English?
3. What are the sport activities that you have participated and enjoyed?
 - Why do you like those sports?
4. How long have you been playing (sport activity that interviewee plays)?
5. Who do you usually participate in sport activity with?
6. Perception of common goal
 When you participate in sport activity with racially mixed team, do you think people have a common or similar goal?
7. Perception of cooperation
 When you participate in sport activity with racially mixed team, do you think your teammates try to cooperate to each other and do team play?
8. Perception of friendship opportunity
 Have you had chances to make friend(s) from outside of your own racial backgrounds through sport activity?
 - If yes, how often do you contact to that friend(s)?
9. Perception of authority support

If we take a look at the U.S. history, racism and racial discrimination have been serious problems in terms of social harmony. The enactment of civil rights legislation has achieved some level of equality among different racial groups. Let's think about sport setting. Do you think law or authority power make you feel comfortable to participate in sport activity with different racial groups?

10. Perception of equal status

When you participate in sport activity with racially mixed team, do you think everybody has equal status regardless of their racial background?

11. In recreational sports setting, do you think that there is something disturbs the equality among participants?

12. Do you prefer to participate in sport activity with people from your own racial background or people from other racial background?

13. Do you think sport activity helps different group of people to get along together?

VITA

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